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Modern religious cults and
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**MODERN RELIGIOUS CULTS
AND SOCIETY**

MODERN RELIGIOUS CULTS AND SOCIETY

A SOCIOLOGICAL INTERPRETATION OF A
MODERN RELIGIOUS PHENOMENON

BY

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TO
THE MEMORY
OF
ARNOLD WINKELRIED FISMER
TEACHER COUNSELOR FRIEND

"Our little systems have their day,
They have their day, and cease to be,
They are but broken lights of Thee
And Thou, O Lord, are more than they."

—TENNYSON

FOREWORD

Modern religious cults and isms, characteristically American phenomena, and exerting, as they do, a profound influence upon the social and religious life of our generation, afford a sociological laboratory in which the student of society may test out numerous and important social theories. Fraught with social implications of great moment they constitute an unquestioned socio-religious problem, not to be regarded lightly nor to be set aside with a mere gesture.

Inasmuch as no religious organization, whether of the historic, orthodox group or of the reactionary and schismatic cults, possesses the entire truth, it is no more than charitable that the constituent elements of truth in all be acknowledged, regardless of where or in what form they are discovered.

Even though we assume that some wholesome influences are exerted by the modern religious cults, it will, nevertheless, soon become apparent that when placed upon the scale of social evaluation they are still found to be wanting. The intolerant zeal and the narrow sectarian spirit so generally manifested by the adherents of the several cults do not increase the effectiveness of creative religious energy as a social dynamic.

In support of this attitude the writer has sought to make four points in this dissertation:—

I. The cults as religious abnormalities involve an expenditure of socio-religious energy which is unproductive of an adequate return in social values.

II. The resultant effect of the socio-religious forces as exerted by the cults is maladjustment in the social process.

III. Religious cults are deficient in social responsibility, therefore delinquent in advancing a program which has social progress as its goal.

IV. Religious cults are the lengthened shadows of denominationalism. As such they either augment or intensify the forces which militate against Christian unity and undermine Christianity as the super-socializing, spiritual dynamic.

A wholly unbiased appraisal of the ethical and social value of so controversial a religious group as the cults is inherently difficult because of the mind-set which almost instinctively inclines us to accept the harmonious and to rule out the irreconcilable and the strangely new. As outsiders or aliens to the cults we may lack the sympathetic approach that a study of their tenets and practices warrants. Prejudice takes root easily and thrives well in religion. A distorted vision and a biased mind may, therefore, set the enquirer rudely on an iconoclastic mission.

The writer, then, wary of the baneful effects of a prejudiced attitude in any research project of the nature of the cults, but with an eye single to the truth, is controlled by a certain amount of diffidence as he gives himself to the task of winnowing the chaff from the wheat. His is a most insistent hope that the garnering of the grain may justify the efforts expended and that he may be accredited as a "laborer worthy of his hire."

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— A NOTE AS TO METHOD. So abundant are the modern religious cults that the consideration of but eighteen or twenty of the more important ones is feasible within the scope of this study. The analytical method and interpretative approach to the cults are adhered to throughout. A general discussion of such social theories which dynamic religion as a determining force seems to render basic in the social process is made preliminary to an analysis and critique of those sectarian religious groups of which this study treats. The four hypotheses as indicated above are tested out in the light of such analysis and of specific situations and an evaluation is sought.

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MODERN RELIGIOUS CULTS AND SOCIETY

INTRODUCTION

"Ye who listen with credulity to the whispers of fancy, and pursue with eagerness the phantoms of hope."—JOHNSON.

Religion is socially powerful. In an effort to adjust himself to an ever-changing environment which imposes certain and definite restraints upon him, man discovers that religion is a conditioning factor which is effective for his own complete happiness as well as for the good of the society of which he is an integral part.

Men and movements come and go, but like Tennyson's Brook, religion goes on forever, though not without its ripples and sallying eddies. The shuttle of men's faith and beliefs has woven threads of varied hue into the fabric of every civilization, from the dawn of history to the twentieth century. The texture of this fabric has not always been uniform throughout. Flaws have been and still may be detected. Yet in spite of the frequent insufficiency of the religious conduct of men, it is, nevertheless, true that religious values and traditional beliefs have given content to cultural and behavior patterns, have established social customs, and have developed traits of personal and group initiative and ingenuity that have colored the life of the world throughout the centuries.

But there never has been, possibly never will be, a complete unanimity of thought and action with regard to the way that the devout should interpret spiritual values in a mundane and mechanistic setting. Religious ideals may well be fixed, but the method employed in rationalizing and realizing them has frequently afforded not a few unpleasant chapters in human history.

Ardent protagonists of, as well as equally zealous antagon-

ists to, religion have gone forth out of every age; and the twentieth century has not been remiss in furnishing its share of such enthusiasts. Anti-religionists have of late been heralding the assertion from the house-tops that religion is slipping. Needless to say, this is somewhat disconcerting to the proponents of religion, and in particular to the ultra-conservative religionists who would interpret this alarm at the outer door as one of the signs of the times which points to an imminent and certain doom. But there need be no undue fear for the future of religion: so long as men hope to be better and fear to become worse, religion cannot die out.

Tourists returning from every point of the compass are telling us that religion is everywhere fighting a battle for its own existence. Materialism and a mechanistic conception of the world are battering at the walls of every religious ideal and establishment. This is not alone true of Christianity, because the same forces which are opposing Christianity in America are antagonistic to Hinduism in India, Mohammedanism in Egypt, Turkey and Persia, Confucianism in China, Buddhism in Burma, and Shintoism in Japan. The religions of the world are being challenged. Men of thought and insight in India are saying that the wretched condition of that great country is attributable to a religion which is effective as a narcotic, lulling the minds of the people to sleep, paralyzing their hands, and shackeling their wills.

While periodic crises have always been present in religion, increasing intelligence, scientific skill, and economic advance are factors which are making the revolutionary process in religion decidedly more determined than ever before. It is folly to close an eye to this situation or to whistle in the dark to keep up courage. Because increasing numbers are taking religion less seriously, and because others, over-zealous and ill-equipped to make their religion adaptive to life here and now, have been seated in the saddle, courageous, though grossly unsympathetic antagonists of religion have leaped into the headlines to tell us that religion is doomed. Atheists and Humanists would caricature all religion in the role of a

clown strutting up and down the stage to keep everybody happy, behind whose make-up there is a hopeless despair and gloom. Popular writers of the day, as well as many leading scientists and honest thinkers, are manifesting a decidedly unfriendly attitude toward religion. The pendulum has swung from the one extreme of an other-worldly religion to the other of a mundane, human religion. And so men of the type and calibre of Professor Harry Elmer Barnes have come forth to tell us that "what is needed most today in the religious field is a wrecking-machine."¹ Such a destructive devise is already having crushing effects upon many superstitions and inadequate types of traditional Christianity.

So much so are the anti-religionists making their voice heard that the faithful are beginning to take inventory, with the result that the discovery is becoming more and more apparent that what this old world needs is not more religious sectarian groups with a zeal that is largely individualistic and often irrational, but a religion that can be rationalized and be made adequate to meet the pressing demands of so hectic an age as ours.

If such inter-stimulation can bring this very desirable and necessary result, assuring not only the permanency, but also the constructive efficiency of religion, then no undue concern need be felt about the shrewd but pharisaic search for the mote or the beam in the eyes of others. Lethargy and indifference on the one hand, and irrational zeal, sometimes bordering on sheer fanaticism on the other, have always been the bane of real religion.

If the opponents of our sometimes too materialistic religious philosophy can make us chafe under their criticisms, then they too may be counted among the benefactors of the human family. To say the least, religion today is being placed in the crucible. The time of testing is at hand; but let no one be needlessly disturbed. This crisis, like all others, will pass and our vision will be clarified. Man still needs religion, and that, the Humanists notwithstanding, a religion with a God.

¹ *The Twilight of Christianity*, p. 460.

Religious "faith is," as Professor Charles Ellwood points out, "of the very essence of normal life. The ages of irrational faith, we may hope, are past or passing; but the age of a rational and understanding faith is still ahead. We need the maximum of faith built upon facts."² And well does Professor G. B. Smith say, "beneath the stirrings and seethings of modern unrest, one discerns dimly the outlines of a religion which shall trust in the larger future instead of being bound literally to the past; . . . which shall develop scientific control into a mighty instrument for the welfare of man instead of uttering warnings against the 'dangers' of scientific theories."³

But the present period of religious unrest is not unique in the Church. There never was a time when quiet reigned supreme universally. Every age presented its problems. The adjustment that modern science and learning is making compulsory in the religious world today was matched by the rise of frequent heresies and schisms throughout church history. The Christian Church has always been jealous of its doctrines and beliefs, and has, even from the very beginning, looked with disdain, if not at times with trembling, upon every heresy or sectarian practice that threatened to disturb its peace. When a new sect or schism raised its head, the Church would answer with a creedal pronouncement or an anathema. What is known as the "Apostles' Creed" is nothing else than a simple but emphatic protest of the church against the Gnostic heresy.

When the spirit of the Protestant Reformation, running like a prairie fire throughout European Christendom, had inflamed the mind and the heart of people everywhere, the greatest of all schisms was effected. The Catholic church was impotent to check the blaze in spite of its bans and interdicts which no longer held any horror for the "Protestant Sects," nor made any impression upon them. They had come to stay.

² *The Reconstruction of Religion*, p. 31.

³ *Social Idealism and the Changing Theology*, p. 154.

But not only has the Catholic church frowned upon these so-called sects: from Protestantism itself there has gone forth a veritable spawn of religious abnormalities. With remarkable fecundity it has hatched out a brood of cults and isms which fairly confuses the imagination. Admittedly, Protestantism, because of its basic principle of private judgment in the matter of Scripture interpretation, leads the procession with its multitudinous sects. But despite this fact, it is impossible to defend the assumption that sectarianism is solely a natural consequence of Protestant principles. Both Catholicism and Judaism are having busy times of it, keeping their respective houses in order. "They made me keeper of the vineyards, but mine own have I not kept." (Song of Solomon 1:6). Indeed the cults themselves are schismatic. Their divisions and subdivisions almost defy enumeration. "Every new sect in the firmament gives rise at once to a brood of satellites, and the increase goes on with almost planetary energy and planetary speed."⁴

Professor Edwin Lewis points out that "denominationalism is simply the Protestant principle run wild."⁵ If this be true, then it is hardly an overstatement to say that the cults are such phases of Protestantism as have become erratic and incorrigible. However, denominationalism was not born in post-Reformation days. It may have become more articulate then, but its roots actually reach back to the first century. Group solidarity does not preclude rallying around dominant and aggressive personalities, and the spirit of loyalty to such may show itself to a Paul, a Cephas, an Apollos, or to Christ. (I Cor. 1:12). It is but just to Paul at least, to say, as has been suggested that, had he had a sectarian attitude and spirit, he "would have wrecked Christianity in the first century."⁶ Traces of the sectarian spirit are already discernible in one of the Sons of Thunder, who, when he discovered another casting out demons, "forbade him, because he followeth not

⁴ "A Bumper Crop of Cults," *World's Work*, Sept. 1929, p. 84.

⁵ *A Manual of Christian Beliefs*, p. 117.

⁶ Peter Ainslie, *The Scandal of Christianity*, p. 42.

with us." (Luke 9:49).

The Pharisees and the Sadducees constituted influential sects in Jesus' day, (Acts 5:17; 15:5; 26:5) and alas! indeed, an eminent rabbi of our day⁷ would put Jesus in the same category with the Pharisaic cult when he interprets the method that the Master used in his contest with the Jewish rulers as being no less sectarian than theirs.

In early days the followers of Jesus were looked upon by contemporaneous Judaism as constituting another sect. (Acts 24:5, 14; 28:22). But it is highly improbable that the Jews gave them the name "Christian" which name occurs but three times in the New Testament and which the followers of Jesus never used of themselves. The Jews would not have given to this despised sect a name which might in any way be constructed as having some connection with the Messiah. They chose rather to call them the "sect of the Nazarenes." Native Antiochians, who had established a reputation for themselves in the invention of derisive names, more than likely were the first to call the devotees of the Nazarene "Christian," and this no doubt approbriously.

Julian was loathe to give them a name in which they might later glory, and consequently decreed that they should henceforth be known not as "Christians" but as "Galileans."

Obviously then, the Christians hated by Jew and pagan alike, were regarded suspiciously by their times and contemporaries as strangely different and over-zealous in their devotion to the new Teacher, arisen in Israel. Jesus was a new leader with a novel idea that captivated the imagination. He had a panacea to offer for which his and previous generations had long been looking. Men always follow that which pleases, satisfies, relieves and heals, and Jesus had this to offer.

But this so-called Christian sect was not a sect in the sense that we have come to understand that term today. The Christian faith was nothing else than an amplified and a more complete Judaism, which time has proved to be a leaven which leaveneth the whole lump. More and more it is becoming

⁷ Vd. J. Klausner, *Jesus of Nazareth*, p. 34.

apparent that the followers of the Christ are the "salt of the earth." Nor is this position held with any feeling of self-righteousness. Of course, in the broader sense, every Christian denomination is a sect,—and so may Christianity have been thought of as a Jewish denomination, hence as a sect. But its astounding world-wide dimensions and all-pervading power have led us to think of it not as sectarian nor in terms of the schismatic, but rather in terms of the whole, the complete, the ultimate, from which numerous other small and strange ramifications have gone forth. The latter are thought of in this study as constituting what we have commonly come to refer to as cults or sects.

The integration of Christianity makes contention against schism a very vital and ever-present problem. But sects, cults and schisms are not peculiar to Christianity. They are found in every religion. There are, for example, thirteen sects in Shintoism, eighteen or more in Buddhism, over a score in Sikhism, seventy-two in Mohammedanism, and over a hundred in Jainism. In the matter of multitudinous divisions, therefore, Christianity feels at one with these other great world religions.

There are so many factors that exert their influence upon the development of religion, as for instance, the matter of food supply, the means of livelihood, personal health, war, and the gratification of wants and passions, that one can very readily see how easily society in its growth and differentiation has come to look upon religious cults and isms as one of its chief by-products. It is absolutely impossible to trace a continuous, orderly and logical development in religion, for at one time we discover a period of great cohesion and unification of thought and feeling, and at another incohesion and incompatibility. Sects reveal definite cohesion within the individual group to a remarkable degree, but decided incohesion and incompatibility with their social environment or any other body originally over it. They remain alien to many interests of established society.

When reference is made to the sects, as we have come to

know them, it is usually in a derogatory sense. Our impatience of them as they over-emphasize what to us may be the unessential, or as they exalt petty peculiarities over and above what we regard as the great and unifying pre-requisites of religion, constrains us to label them, in contradistinction to the larger and historic divisions of Christianity, as cults or sects. Where any movement digresses from the normal, attention is soon drawn to its tendencies, and the larger group usually regarding itself with a superior air as a "chosen people," comes to view the divergent group with a bit of wary suspicion.

So prolific have the cults become in recent years that we have come to regard them as unique and modern religious phenomena. It will be found that the elements of heresy, revolt, and schism, as they enter into a study of the religious cults, have ancient antecedents. Like every other movement, the cults have also their times of testing. Under persecution they usually find new life, ("The blood of the martyrs is the seed of the church,") but not all nor always are they able to survive permanently in the face of it. They wax and they wane, they come and they go, they flourish and they decline. And upon the ruins of a disillusioned cult very often a new sect will arise, more aggressive and stronger than the last. Their unequaled zeal and persistence, in spite of every repression, inhibition, and abuse, witness to the fact that they have the will, if nothing else, to endure. This rhythmic appearance and disappearance inclines one to the belief that they occur in cycles. Is this so?

It is commonly believed that history repeats itself, but even a superficial analysis must be convincing that only "certain principles of human nature and social process operate throughout history, and their working may be traced in one age as in another. . . . It is easy to discover resemblances, and to over-estimate their importance."⁸ So also regarding the apparent cyclical appearances of the cults. Certain types may reappear, certain phases of the religious proclivity in human nature may

⁸ C. W. Cooley, *Social Process*, p. 34.

become apparent, indeed even appear to be cyclical, but not the organizations themselves.

Ideas, sentiments, and passions are recurrent, but the nature of their external expression is new with each reappearance. The cults as distinct organizations can hardly be regarded as steps forward in the social process, but merely as a remnant hanging on, a left-over from another dominant group evidencing a protest against stringent requirements, or a concession to human weakness and defeat.

At best, the cults are a dreadful reality in modern religious life. They are problematic just because they are schismatic. Whatever ethical or social values may inhere in their religious teachings, they are offset very largely by the erratic and strangely singular practices which their tenets give birth to and which are so frequently at variance with the best that makes for a constructive and adjusted social order. The abnormality of various religious types, as exemplified in these tangent groups, creates maladjustment. These abnormalities seriously handicap religion as it endeavors to fulfill its function in society.

But as one remembers the superabundance of the cults as such, rather than the numerical strength of any individual group, it will become apparent that they do, in the aggregate, exert a definite influence upon the religious and social life of men everywhere. It will prove worth while to learn just what the nature of this influence may be.

The dominant passion of all the cults is assured salvation. Within their "inner circle" are discovered eccentrics and fanatics, fools and faddists, all of whom are deeply concerned with the same thing—salvation. Because this is gained largely through personal effort, their behavior patterns warrant both close scrutiny and proper evaluation.

Sociology fixes the attention on social groups. It is interested primarily in an analysis and explanation of the conduct and behavior of society. A study of society must always give consideration to the element of religion as a determinant of individual conduct, as well as a conditioning factor, of no

mean proportion, in group action.

Religious cults distinguish themselves almost always by their eccentricities, their extreme conservatism, or their atavistic tendencies. It is not the purpose of this study to delve into the theological disputes, strange doctrines, or superstitious beliefs to which the various cults adhere, save as these may enter into the consideration of the behavior of the so-called esoteric groups. We are here interested primarily in a sociological interpretation of the behavior of some of the more important cults which enter into the picture of a major American religious phenomenon.

PART ONE

THE BACKGROUND OF RELIGIOUS CULTS

Chapter One

THE PHENOMENON OF RELIGIOUS CULTS

"Men have dulled their eyes with sin,
And dimmed the light of heaven with doubt,
And built their temple-walls to shut thee in,
And framed their iron creeds to shut thee out."

—Henry Van Dyke.

The student of religious phenomena cannot but be impressed with the fact that ever since the Christian Church was fully organized, their infinite diversity of intellectual equipment impelled men everywhere to emphasize disproportionately certain aspects of faith which were originally regarded as common property of all believers.

Abstruse questions frequently loomed up as a threatening specter to menace the peace and unity of the Church. These disputes have not always been theological, particularly not so during the last century. In the wake of various racial, economic, nationalistic, or social movements, to which controversial literature bears little or no testimony, numerous ecclesiastical divisions, (not to speak of the innumerable abortive groups, now but a matter of history) have been left behind like thriving branches, quivering boughs, or parasitic clusters, all clinging tenaciously to the main trunk or contending for a place in the sun.

Professor James Harvey Robinson maintains that "a history of theology could be written in terms of grouches, wounded pride and aversions."¹ and well might we add, also a history of religious sectarian schisms. In other words, the personal equation has been no mean factor in the processes which have brought the all too numerous divisions and subdivisions of religious sectarianism into vogue and into disrepute.

The absurdity of describing religion in general as a "de-

¹ *The Mind in the Making*, p. 45.

fense mechanism" or as a "rationalization" must become apparent when its higher and nobler forms are studied in contrast with the tangent or excursive religious cults. These latter are usually just that, a "defense mechanism" committed to the defense of tradition or sacred lore, to justify eccentric theological positions, or indeed to furnish the smoke-screen for covetousness, ambition, or lust. The irony of the whole matter is sometimes seen, when in the course of time and by a process of evolution, a new sect becomes the orthodox and then looks with disdain or suspicion upon any progeny that it may be directly or indirectly responsible for.

Causal explanation has ever been the fascination of scientific students. All of nature is linked up with conditioning factors. The descent of a rain-drop, the flight of a bird in the skies, the quiver of a blade of grass on the prairie, the color scheme of wooded hills in October, the budding forth of new life in the Springtime—all are capable of scientific explanation. So also the behavior of man. His relationships have come to be so intricately complex and inextricably enmeshed with the world of things and affairs, that to explain them in comprehensible terms is proving a gigantic, though not hopeless, task. Nor is his religious behavior any less complex and easy of explanation. There is no single or only type or category of religious expression into which he may be placed, for his tastes religiously are as varied as they are aesthetically, culturally, or intellectually. Social, historical, geographical, intellectual, and traditional factors enter into his religious complex. A conclusive proof to this effect is discernible in the many hundreds of religious cults which have sprung into existence in the last fifty to one hundred years.

Any parent will bear witness to the fact that when his children come to him with their multitudinous questions which loom up so big in their little minds, the little ones will always invent their own answers or explanations in the event that his should be unsatisfactory to their limited comprehension. The child wills to know. And in this respect men are but grown-up children. They never cease asking questions which

their disturbed and inquisitive minds compel them to seek an explanation for. Being incurably religious by nature, man usually seeks to link up his every-day experiences with the Divine. And child-like, should his inquisitive mind find answers deficient for his problems, he will forthwith proceed to make such as will satisfy his nature and his thought. In his efforts to find a way out of the bewildering labyrinth in which he nigh has lost his foot-hold, he will not infrequently turn to religion.

The psychological make-up of some men is often so strange that they find even commonly accepted standards unsatisfying. The result, inevitably, is the creation of a religious mode or expression which does satisfy,—and a schism is effected or a new sect created. Such cults usually admit of explanation on a rational basis. While *in toto* they certainly constitute a religious phenomenon, individually they may be defined in terms of human quest for the solution of what to men may be very real, though perhaps very often, naïve or ingenuous problems.

Our outlook upon the world and life in it has been changed considerably during the last three or four generations. Traditional authority, which for two hundred years after the Reformation defied any and every attempt at its overthrow, has been exposed to the penetrating light of modern thought. The heretofore impregnable Bible has been subjected to the scientists' scalpel and to the critics' lancet. But as the result of historic and scientific research the Bible has not in the least lost its authority as a final criterion in spiritual matters, and has made a new approach to life in religious endeavor inevitable. It is the old Bible, but interpreted in a new light.

However, the old Book has fallen into the hands of more heartless inquisitors than unbelieving scientists. Its precepts and teachings have been woefully distorted to comply with the tenets of certain cults; many of its statements, never intended to be strictly scientific, have been made the bone and sinew of backward-looking cults, lamentably out of step with modern learning: and indeed, it has been assigned an inferior

place at the side of a work purported to be a guide to its real and often hidden meaning. Obviously, this is a case where the creature is exalted above its creator.

Darwinian hypotheses have brought us under the spell of evolution. More and more are the immeasurable sweeps of the universe being studied and understood; wide expanses have been shrunk into negligible distances, the infinitesimal been magnified a thousand fold, and analysis made possible. The universe is not static, but is changing, evolving. The physicist, the chemist, the biologist, the geologist, the psychologist, the surgeon, the sociologist, all are helping make the advance of man and society toward the goal of a complete and harmonious whole less difficult. "Atheism, materialism, and agnosticism are an old, old trinity, but they had up to our time been at the mercy of more positive attitudes through their inability to really answer those insurgent questions: Whence? Whither? and Why?"² These three questions, which vitally concern every man who does any thinking at all, have taken on more serious proportions in the light of the great mass of accumulated knowledge.

Unable any longer to hold their equilibrium in the face of advancing knowledge and scientific discoveries, there have been those who suddenly became obsessed with the idea that they had been singled out by God as a new messiah for a new age and that into their charge was placed a truth, miraculously revealed, fraught with illimitable content and possibility. All of this sustains the fact, that while some phases of traditional faith may be tottering because of insecure foundations, we are still surrounded by a "cloud of witnesses" paying tribute to religious faith, though much of it, indeed, may be incredible. This credulity, often bordering on the superstitious, is all the more amazing when we remember that in all the world there is nothing so conservative and fixed as religion. The extraordinary faith that the initiated in some of the cults manifest lends support to what someone has said that "there is nothing too stupid for intelligent people to believe."

² G. G. Atkins, *Modern Religious Cults and Movements*, p. 50.

There is a certain spiritual hunger in man which craves satisfaction, an inner urge that struggles for expression. He is always vitally concerned about his health, his peace, and his happiness. His spiritual nature, almost instinctively reaches out to the Unseen. But the nineteenth century with its astounding industrial activities, commercial enterprises and restless immigrant groups, its emphasis upon business and bread, on machinery and invention, did not furnish the soil in which the inner and quiet yearnings of a man's soul could thrive.

Organized Protestantism, largely busy with its own sectarian pursuits, too often neglected the things that mattered most. This was capitalized by shrewd and egoistic men and women who in an attempt to solve the problems that were pressing, thrust new religions into the seething caldron of religious organizations. "Almost all of the American cult leaders created grandiose illusions for themselves: illusions of purity or perfection, economic justice, of physical or spiritual happiness. That was their way of seeking happiness. That was their way of seeking salvation. . . . These illusions and the cults founded upon them were appropriate to their time."³

To accuse the historic churches of sluggishness in Christian service is to be unjust to them. But at the same time, there were those who, chafing under the crass materialism of the time which the devout failed to counteract sufficiently, conceived the idea that this was the golden age in which an excursion into the suburbs of religion would be not only seasonable, but also promising for an abundant harvest.

Pragmatic tests satisfied the founders of the various new cults, philosophically at least, that they were not mistaken, and the new converts and subsequent adherents with great, at times almost fanatic enthusiasm, brought their gold and frankincense and myrrh, filling the coffers and feeding the vanity of the new messiahs.

The stern and unrelenting positions held by ultra-conservatives in theology caused a reaction, the echoes of which were heard in the birth-pangs of various new cults. Men have al-

³ Gilbert Seldes, *The Stammering Century*, p. XIII.

ways sought to reconcile God's ways with them, they have always endeavored to find a plausible explanation for their ills and woes and for so much apparently innocent suffering. They would penetrate the veil. Not satisfied with the older theories they made haste to solve their own questions in their own way. The last century being a time of general religious unrest, of strange doctrines, visions and miracles, as well as a time when belief in ghosts and witchcraft was quite common, it was no wonder that new but strange and unorthodox religious practices should become the vogue, satisfying the morbid, consoling the comfortless, healing the neurotics, and supporting the aged in their dotage.

The borderland cults, numbered by the hundreds (and the end is not yet) flourish exuberantly on American soil. The democracy of this country has always been a wholesome atmosphere for religious quackery, fanaticism, and radicalism. Our religious freedom is made the most of. From earliest colonial times when European religious intolerance drove to our shores large numbers, here to find in our religious liberty their haven of safety, down to the present, when persecuted Russian Mennonites are likewise turning their faces toward our land of freedom, America has been the Promised Land for the religiously oppressed. And this cue has been taken up by the founders of strange religions, who feel absolutely secure in propagating their new faith, exempt from ridicule and banter. So extensive, so vast is America that they can without any great difficulty isolate themselves and their followers in our teeming urban centers or on our great western desert lands.

Extremists are found in every walk of life, in every vocation, in the arts and sciences, and the religious world offers no exception. But the "astounding thing about all the quackeries, fads and movements of the past one hundred years in America is that they were first accepted by superior people, by men and women of education, intelligence, breeding, wealth, and experience."⁴

The various isms are fads or hobbies with so many people.

⁴ *Ibid.*, p. XI.

"Get on the American Bandwagon" is the spirit that soon causes the old wagon to creak under its load. The American is easily swayed by number. "Everybody is doing it; it is all the rage; it is the up-to-date, the really classy or fashionable thing to do,"—this is the spirit that makes it so easy for fads and cults and isms to flourish, once they have gotten a foothold.

Europeans as they visit our shores are amused with the haste and the short-cut routes that dominate our every-day life. They remind us that, while our democracy fosters the practical, it often closes an eye to the rather careless way that the masses avail themselves of their education privileges. The popular masses are not unduly burdened with an analytical temper. They are more impressed with large numbers, big things, quick methods, majorities, even strong minorities—and the great following which the cults command but substantiates the fact that we are unusually gullible to new things or movements, especially when large numbers are involved—not less so in the religious domain.

The individualism so characteristic of America also makes it an easy matter for anyone so minded to start a new religious movement. And to the founder of a religion, which attracts attention by the very fact that it is "something new," there will readily gravitate kindred individualistic-minded folk who, peradventure, failed to make the grade or to find complete harmony in what organized and historic religious organizations had to offer them. Perhaps their health is broken or their soul rent asunder while walking in the valley of the shadow of death; it may be failure in business or in love that make them susceptible—at any rate, the cults with their utopian schemes and reputed all-sufficient panaceas pretend to offer just what these persons feel they need at that particular time or during that crucial experience.

Affluence and leisure have also paid their homage and rendered their obeisance to Diana of the Cults. The lure of the Oriental cults, for example, has had its especial attraction for folks whose possessions permit of much leisure time. But

wealth is no indication of erudition or profundity of thought. With time on their hands, they ramble around among the fads, foibles, and fancies of the day, only to be enticed perhaps by the charming voice of some contemplative exponent of an eastern cult. Of course, such religion must be paid for. There is a high tariff on such imported wares. And the wealthy deluded cheerfully pay the bill.

The Californian sunshine which has lured many thousands of tourists of every religious complexion, retired business people, and sick folk in search of health to Los Angeles, is largely responsible for making this fair city the greatest Happy Hunting Ground for the cults on American soil. Thus the sunshine of those southwestern skies enhances the growth both of vegetation and of religious cults. In fact, almost every health resort, summer or winter play-ground, is literally besieged with the various kinds of healing cults.

Says a writer, "We shall not know America until we know the religions that America has made and embraced,"⁵ and satirically he observes that "the cults symbolize the way we amuse ourselves religiously—for in no particular are we more egregious and incredible than in our religious capers."⁶

7 This religious phenomenon is uniquely American. In European countries scarcely a whisper is heard from the cults and their influence is negligible, although some of their missionary efforts have not so much established their groups there, but brought their converts to our shores. In Hungary, for example, the State recognizes but six churches, the Roman Catholic, the Greek Catholic, the Greek Orthodox, the Lutheran, the Reformed, and the Unitarian. All other denominations are regarded as sects, much as in Germany, where such denominations as the Baptist and the Methodist are treated as sectarian, and only the Roman Catholic, the Lutheran and the Reformed faiths receive State recognition. Russia, prior to the Soviet regime, held forth under the sway of the Greek Orthodox faith. Italy, Belgium, Austria, Spain and what of

⁵ C. W. Ferguson, *The Confusion of Tongues*, p. 9.

⁶ *Ibid*, p. 8.

France is not atheistic are preponderately Roman Catholic. Switzerland and Holland are largely Calvinistic and Scandinavia Lutheran. In countries, then, where it is found expedient to adhere to the creed favored by the State, sects and isms do not find much encouragement. When religion has State support and people have become accustomed to such a system over a period of hundreds of years, it naturally is extremely difficult for cults to get a great deal of popular support or encouragement.

It remains for America to be the sanctuary of the cults and adherents of the various shades of religious belief. But not only has America reached forth her protecting hand,—here also have strictly “made in America” religious products been given to the world: Mormonism with a following of 606,000, Christian Science with its 202,000 adherents, Spiritualism with a list of 50,000 devotees, and Russellism (statistics not available) tagging on behind with its many more thousands of students of the Word.

Religious life in America is not decadent. Its multitudes are, in spite of a materialistic and mechanistic atmosphere, vitally concerned in matters of the soul. Humanism, America’s newest religious creation, but attests the religious interest that is still alive in the deeper recesses of men’s souls, and that in the making of new cults, she has not yet grown impotent nor weary.

Chapter Two

THE DYNAMIC OF THE CULTS

"But Faith, fanatic Faith, once wedded fast
To some dear falsehood, hugs it to the last."

—Thomas Moore.

A perusal of the full page announcements of church services in the Saturday editions of any of our great newspapers compels one to the conclusion that the Athenians of Paul's day were not alone in their insatiable desire ever to seek something new. Obviously, many of the ancient Athenians have migrated over into the twentieth century, else such advertisements could make little appeal. New styles, new models, new types, new this and new that, appear to be the life of trade. It must be "something new" or it will arouse no interest; it must be "the latest" or it will not attract; it must be "the newest thing out" or it cannot be sold. Thus very often ancient values are sacrificed upon this modern altar of human restlessness.

This same temper is discernible in the religious attitude of the present generation. The staid and orthodox way of faith seems unable to satisfy this clamor for the new and the thrilling on the part of the religiously restless. So exacting are the demands of a rigid faith, that many, lacking moral and spiritual stamina, are seeking after an easier way unto salvation. The cults seem to be the answer. Their popularity and fascination for multitudes is most certainly largely attributable to just this spirit of the times and of religious uncertainty.

The historic Christian Church has not been unaware of the tolls that this modern tendency is exacting. It has observed numerous tangent groups in the offing responding to this trend as overtures are made to those who have become dissatisfied with the status quo in things religious. The religious cults pretend to be able to answer the "cry for bread" and appar-

ently do not bid in vain for a following. But rather than compromise its gospel or betray its trust the Church has frowned upon the cults and isms, many of which are perverse, and has, in spite of their pernicious influence, maintained its ascendancy with increasing devotion and successes.

Yet in spite of the overwhelming numbers arrayed against them, the suspicion with which they are regarded, the prejudice and intolerance which beset their way, and the hostile religious sanctions and traditions counteracting every move on their part, the cults have most tenaciously held on. They are not easily laughed out of court nor put into the limbo of outworn and defunct relics of another day. It is just this stubborn tenacity, this power of germinating as well as of enduring—the dynamic of the cults—that arrests our interest and attention.

As one begins to analyze the motive power of the cults, it soon becomes apparent that major importance must be affixed to the power of dominating personalities. Every important and influential movement is built around such. The Founder of Christianity commanded the respect and admiration of friend and foe because he spoke with authority. He was earnestly zealous, intensely sympathetic, actually impatient of sham and hypocrisy. Self-abnegation marked the brief career that was his; he believed in his gospel and sealed it with his life. He cast the spell of his personality over his twelve lowly followers, and it has charmed countless millions throughout the twenty centuries of the Christian era.

And so, for example, Christian Science today is unthinkable apart from Mary Baker Eddy. She is affectionately and reverently spoken of as "Mother Eddy" by her disciples who have almost deified her and made her co-Savior of the world. She was stern and exacting and held to "her doctrine with a belief that burned like fire. And there were times when her belief so consumed her that she was like a disembodied being."¹ Her teachings, rather than those of

¹ E. F. Dakin, *Mrs. Eddy: The Biography of a Virginal Mind*, p. 191.

Christ, whom she purported to interpret, are generally reverted to as the court of last appeal. The reverence accorded her increases with each passing year. The force of her personality has not been spent, nor, in all likelihood, will it be for many years to come.

This also has been largely the case with other strong personalities such as Joseph Smith, Jr., Brigham Young, Aimee McPherson Hutton, Benjamin Purnell, Helen Petrova Blavatsky, Ann Lee, Charles Taze Russell, John Alexander Dowie, and Frank Buchman. Merely to mention their names is immediately to visualize a mighty host of faithful followers who are prepared to bring almost any sacrifice for their leaders and their teachings. The Fox sisters may not have had the force nor the charm of personality that some other founders of new religions have had, but then there are other names to conjure with like those of Sir Oliver Lodge and Sir Arthur Conan Doyle, which reflected even greater glory upon their cult than did that of the two ignorant but tricky country girls.

"A founder of a movement does more than teach his followers. Whether he will or not, he becomes an example. If he flouts the responsibility his hypocrisy injures his cause; if he embodies his ideals he becomes an inspiration."² Ideals are not as easily embodied as they are taught, but this has not been so distracting as one might well suppose, for in a clever way, allegiance and devotion to some of the cults' founders and leaders, have depended rather upon the interpretation of facts than upon facts themselves. This is always a great convenience of which the followers of some questionable leaders have known how to make the most.

The cults would be short-lived were it not for another factor, that of unlimited enthusiasm, which, sometimes losing all sense of bounds and proportions, results in fanaticism. "Supreme crises make direct appeal to supreme ideals."³ When primary enthusiasms go stale, persecution or martyr-

² Shailer Mathews, *Jesus on Social Institutions*, p. 65.

³ Editorial in *The Biblical World*, March 1920, p. 113.

dom may whip the smouldering embers into roaring flames. "It is harder to arouse enthusiasm for the Kingdom of God than for a denomination."⁴ And especially more than for an exotic cult.

The intensive earnestness of cult leaders is readily imparted to their followers. Enthusiasm, inherently contagious, and wishful thinking, one of enthusiasm's step-children, may easily convert their subjects to a mild stage of insanity with the result that these followers see visions, hear rappings, speak in tongues, forget their aches and pains, or believe to find happiness, charm of personality, prosperity and success via the mail-order route.

Fanatic zeal which kept St. Simeon Stylites at the top of a sixty foot pillar for thirty years without descending, which may explain the stigmata of St. Francis of Assisi, or furnish the reason why the Hindu fakir can hold his fist closed until the nails of his fingers grow through the back of his hand, is capable also of producing a stranger "religious psychosis" in people than most of us are prepared to admit. When Russian Doukhobors go forth naked in mid-winter to meet the Lord upon his return; when Christian Scientists expose a family or a community to a contagious disease in the face of common sense, which dictates that the very best medical attention be commanded; or when the body of Willa Rhodes, a sixteen year old priestess of a cult, is discovered buried under the floor of her parents' home in Los Angeles, having previously been frozen in ice and carried about for fourteen months: then only fanaticism will explain such senseless, cruel or weird religious behavior.

When Dr. Harry Emerson Fosdick told his congregation that some of the most prominent modern cults face the temptation to be religious for comfort alone and that there was a lot of religion of a kind in which a man loves God for what he can get out of it, he touched upon a very vital stream that supplies the cults with much of their stimulus and motive power. This motive, incidentally, reaches back and across

⁴ *Ibid*, p. 113.

the centuries. Were the patriarchal Jacob living today, possessed of the same religious concepts as expressed in his vow at Bethel,—“If God will be with me and will keep me in this way that I go, and will give me bread to eat and raiment to put on so that I can come again to my father’s house in peace, then shall the Lord be my God,” (Genesis 28: 20, 21) he might be regarded as an influential member of the cults.

Some people do not seem to make the right contacts in their old faiths. They are dissatisfied with things as they are. They are ready to swap horses in mid-stream should the chances look brighter for “bread to eat and raiment to put on.” Jesus promised no “flowery beds of ease” but placed a cross at the center of his program. But cross-bearing is not a pleasant experience and men seek rather the line of least resistance. The easy, the pleasant, the harmonious, the flattering, that is what the cults offer—a religion of convenience.

The average man likes to be made to feel that he is something of a god and that is just what Theosophy, New Thought, Humanism, and other cults of that ilk tell him; or when a soul in deep anguish cries out, “O for the touch of a vanished hand, O for the sound of a voice that is still!”, Spiritualism offers to push aside the veil. If a letter, telegram, or phone call can bring health, prosperity, and happiness, then Silent Unity will deliver the goods. The various healing cults will mend broken health, though not broken bones, and “all that a man hath will he give for his life.” (Job 2:4) The claim to be “the Lord’s own people” appeals to the feeling of spiritual pride. This Mormonism offers in addition to the full present enjoyment of this life and the life to come through the earthly character of its religion, on a level with the low and carnal desires. A religion none too exacting is attractive, to say the least.

To be able to offer proof (and people want to be shown) is to attract not only the curious, but also the credulous. When men came to Jesus with the request, “Show us a sign,” he met them with the rebuke, “Except ye see signs and wonders ye

will not believe," (John 4:48) but when today the quest for a new type of religious reality is conditioned upon a sign, it is the cults which reply, "Lo here, lo there!" Evidence, after a fashion, is not lacking in support of peculiar tenets. At testimony and experience meetings in many of which quackery, fraud, illusion, honest ignorance, and superstition hold sway, the craving for "signs" is often gratified. It is also always easier to attract the crowds by sensationalism than by respectability. That is why strange dress, bare-feet, long hair, flowing robes, and vegetable diets lend their appeal to those who feel that to be religious one must also be a little different.

There is a place in most types of religious expression for emotionalism, usually regarded as a social force of great potency. However, when it becomes excessive or is exploited, as with the Holy Rollers and the cult of the Four Square Gospel in California, it becomes a force that bears watching. Buchmanism with its "soul-surgery" and reputed "first century Christianity" would find its program of religious teaching among college graduates quite difficult to maintain were it not for the element of extreme emotionalism. The cults are adepts in exploiting the emotions of people whose primary need is inspiring and uplifting cultural contacts.

It is but natural that people should want to be healthy and happy. They feel lacks and confusions and dissatisfactions, and since so many have never drunk at the wells of wisdom, they make haste to run after nostrums. Isis had her temple in the Eternal City and she has many chapels in America to which the benighted drift for healing and for happiness. Most such folks want happiness without a change of heart, social habits and views. They come to the cults for a formula, charm or downright magic which shall enable them to straddle issues, live the old life hand in hand with the new, enable them to enjoy sex perversions and harmonious human relations at the same time. For them Jesus is too radical—to the cults they go. Give men happiness according to their own gospel and they are yours.

* — So material well-being, salvation from drudgery, freedom from the common-place is offered in various forms, by mail or by contemplation. Forget the body, live in mind, juggle the shibboleth, and happiness is assured. And to the tent of these cults multitudes will make a beaten path, and go away satisfied.

It is an amazing thing to observe that so many intelligent people do believe in or adhere so obstinately to the doctrines and teachings of the cults. Breeding intellectual dishonesty, as these groups must do, they cast their enchanting spell over the mind as well as over the heart. A writer with penetrating insight furnishes us with a diagnosis which may be entirely apropos here. Says he, "We linger fondly amid illusion and thank with ill grace those who dispel the enchanting mirage."⁵ We do not want to be aroused out of our dreams, nor be disturbed in our complacent moods. We fear the bitter disillusionizing experience.

So the cults make the most of their "trade-secrets." And to the wonderment of the historic churches they maintain a potency, motive power, and dynamic that gives no indication whatever of relaxation for a long time to come.

⁵ W. D. Wallis, The Prejudices of Men, *The American Journal of Sociology*, March 1929, p. 804.

Chapter Three

SOCIAL FACTORS SUSTAINING THE CULTS

"Find out the cause of this effect,
Or rather say, the cause of this defect,
For this effect defective comes by cause."

—Shakespeare

Not only do the astounding religious psychology and behavior of a people "mechanically advanced but emotionally primitive" contribute to the perpetuation of the cults, but likewise numerous social factors and situations, which arise in the course of time as cultural pursuits, follow their natural trend. For after the motives, ideals, illusions, dreams, and methods of the founders and leaders of the sects have been studied and explained, we still face the problem as to what there is in the social and economic conditions of the times which sustains the vitality of their religion.

Masterful personal leadership is an absolute essential in every worthwhile social movement, especially in the sphere of religion, where great visions and deep enthusiasm are necessary. No cause can hope for success until it crystalizes, so to speak, about one or more personalities. While religion, to be effective must have a practical side, it is not generally nor entirely divorced from theory. But since men are not sufficiently motivated by abstract ideas, it is usually loyalty and devotion to the leadership of a strong personality that sway and inspire them for larger usefulness.

The effectiveness of leadership among the various religious cults is unquestionable—its levels are another matter. Unusual care is always exercised that the mantle of leadership and authority is laid upon the shoulders of one worthy and well qualified to carry out the ideals and the teachings of the founder. The request of Elisha for a double portion of the

spirit of Elijah must ring true, else digression from the "truth" is likely. Enthusiasm is highly requisite, even though it be blind or bigoted.

Of the cults it is also true as of water, that they never rise above their own level. Their practice and behavior betray unwittingly the level to which leadership has succeeded in lifting them. They may deviate, they may stagnate, indeed, even degenerate, but they almost never ascend a higher scale than that originally set by the founder or subsequently by the leaders. The imagination, the emotions, and the fervor, the weaknesses and the vanities of some people are readily catered to, and these, responsive to the slightest stimulus, afford shrewd and positive leadership ample material to experiment with. Leadership is a social factor which cannot be overlooked nor underestimated as constituting a vital support of the cults. It keeps the embers alive and maintains interest at fever heat. Faith without it is dead.

Social upheavals and unrest, occasioned by the breaking up of the old order of things, war, industrial strife, economic injustice, and numerous other causes, always make a profound impression upon the soul-life of men. Everything being in a state of flux, they flounder about until their feet again touch *terra firma*. Until that time they are at the beck and call of any form of religious expression which promises to them a satisfactory demonstration of its reality in tangible form. They become interested in anything which offers itself as a reasonable substitute for the old. In such an atmosphere religious revivals flourish. Following the 1830 revivals sects became abundant "providing a perfect burlesque of themselves."

Social unrest also enhances the prophetic tendencies for which some of the cults have become well known. The Millerites managed to adduce as one of the proofs of the end of the world in 1843 the foulness of the factory system. The Russellites and various Adventist groups, in their attempt at the interpretation of the "signs of the times" were compelled repeatedly to revise the date which they had set for the final cataclysm of the world. The Doukhobors, anti-social as they

are, cherish millennial expectations which are energized ever so often by certain aspects of social unrest. Revelations become frequent when men's minds are disturbed. The World War revived such activities. Spiritualism takes a new lease on life when hundreds of thousands of stricken hearts long for a word from their beloved dead. War always quickens pacificism. Human slaughter after the manner of war stimulates such non-resistant groups as the Mennonites, the Shakers, and the Russellites; and certain Mormon factions, which harboring certain ill-feelings against a government unsympathetic to their State, refuse to accede to conscription. In 1898 an apostle of this church in the Salt Lake City Tabernacle eloquently counseled Mormon youth not to enlist for the Spanish American war. In justice, however, to the present-day Mormon church, let it be said that there was no opposition to the draft during the World War and Latter Day Saints bore loyally their share of the sacrifice which was involved.

The Church does not speak with the authority she was once accustomed to. Denominational loyalty is relaxing with an increasing change from the one to the other. And yet the Church remains "one of the most conservative of group institutions."¹ Its creeds are still rigid. They, whether written or unwritten still fulfill an important function "as symbols of social unity and social differentiation."² Well may they serve as symbols, but history shows that they have not always been wholly regarded as such and that "the rigidity of orthodoxy is the inevitable cause of schism."³

Insistence upon the facts of theology and a corresponding neglect of current issues of every-day life is responsible in part for the reign of the cults. For theological hardness "has made much of sin in the abstract and sometimes far too little of concrete sin; it has made more of human depravity than social justice; it has failed to make allowance for varieties of temper and condition; it is partly responsible for the wide-

¹ E. S. Bogardus, *Introduction to Sociology*, p. 332.

² H. R. Niebuhr, *Social Sources of Denominationalism*, p. 182.

³ Peter Ainslie, *The Scandal of Christianity*, p. 129.

spread reaction of the cults and movements of our own time.”⁴

Science has released facts and forces which some ultra-conservatives have been loathe to receive. “The most important and persistent obstacle of progress is the conservative stupidity of human nature.”⁵ And well might have been added “of some theological beliefs.” Wilbur Glenn Voliva of Zion City, Illinois believes that the earth is flat, and others of his kind re-echo or reflect stupidity as gross as that of Father Inchofer when in 1631 he said, “The opinion of the earth’s motion is of all heresies the most abominable, the most pernicious, the most scandalous; the immovability of the earth is thrice sacred,”⁶ or like men, who despairing of God when Newton announced his law of gravitation, said that he substituted gravitation for God.

So when creeds, hard and fixed, refuse to change or to adapt themselves to the march of scientific progress, or when such progress vainly appeals for a change from old concepts, customs, and methods to new, then the democracy of America still leaves enough room for some folks to make fools of themselves. Such very often find a welcome and feel very much at home in the bosom of some of the cults.

We little suspect how stubborn tradition and custom really are until we discover ourselves in opposition to them. They are “as faithful and clinging as an hereditary disease.”⁷ They are jealously guarded by group approval and to act contrary to them is to invite either the ridicule or the hostility of the group. Nevertheless, and usually unconsciously, traditions and customs are ever undergoing modification as they are exposed to new thought. But this generally involves a long and a slow process. When in the realm of the metaphysical, tradition is subjected to current speculation an “ism” usually results.⁸ This speculation may find its inspiration in certain dissatisfaction with things as they are, or in the hope that a certain

⁴ G. G. Atkins, *Modern Religious Cults and Movements*, p. 36.

⁵ W. Rauschenbusch, *Christianizing the Social Order*, p. 30.

⁶ Quoted by H. E. Fosdick, *Adventurous Religion*, p. 101.

⁷ W. Rauschenbusch, *op. cit.* p. 33.

⁸ Cf. F. H. Giddings, *Principles of Sociology*, p. 146.

defense mechanism may be evolved whereby group or religious sanction will approve strange personal proclivities or human weaknesses and sins.

So dominant are certain passions in some people that, fearing ridicule, antagonism, or ostracism, they will leave no stone unturned to create such an environment for themselves which they may find compatible. They will establish geographic or social barriers, if need be, which shut out new stimuli or prohibit contacts with advanced ideas or methods of the day. (3)

The Mormons, at an earlier date, catering to sex perversion, proceeded to give polygamy (polygyny to be more exact) religious sanction, and the idea took hold like wildfire. Finding society in hostile opposition to such atavistic tendencies, they migrated and forthwith isolated themselves in the great and open desert spaces of the West. Polygyny eventually died a hard death in the face of greater and more overwhelming traditions and sanctions which were extraneous to the Mormon group.

The influence of tradition and religious sanction upon behavior accounts for the segregation of the Molokans in Los Angeles; the Shakers have their own communities, and so the Dowieites, the Doukhobors, the House of David, and numerous other communistic groups with their utopian schemes. Thus patriarchal authority, clannishness, and narrow religious dogmatism are nurtured, either because there is revolt against current religious customs and sanctions, or because new sanctions have been created in support of eccentric and strongly individualistic tendencies which frequently necessitate a specially adapted environment in which life may be found agreeable.

A common kinship and a common sympathy, which Professor Giddings has called the "consciousness of kind" inheres in all groups. It is the stimulant of the instinct of sociability, increasing similarities and developing practical co-operation. Especially is this true when a group is on the defensive or in the minority. It is a feeling of kindred spirit which knits them together when a group begin to realize that their common interests are at stake. The members of the cults are always (4)

loyal to each other, particularly when they find constant antagonism or apathy to be their lot at the hands of the historic churches. Hence the defense complex which they all possess. Hostility or indifference but accentuates the fervor of the cults and with their strongly developed "consciousness of kind" they more than ever evidence their will to live.

The perpetuation of the cults is also assisted by the use of foreign languages. It is true, this is not one of the most important factors, but it is sufficiently so to warrant its consideration. There are four and one-half million people in America who never worship in the English tongue, while three million more use foreign tongues jointly with English. "A realistic analysis of the American religious scene shows that its variegated pattern has been drawn to a large extent by European immigrants who have made the United States the crucible of many churches as well as the melting-pot of many races."⁹ This reference, of course, is mainly to the larger denominations of the Christian Church, but it applies to the cults as well. Many of them have European or even Asiatic origins, and while the English language predominates in America, no language need be a barrier to them. As an indication of this we observe that the literature of Russellism has been published in thirty-five different languages. Russian Mennonites, Molokans, and Doukhobors cling tenaciously to their mother tongue. The first and second generation of the German Mennonites, born on American soil, use the tongue of their fathers consistently in their daily associations. The Spiritualists and the Christian Scientists publish a great deal of their literature in the German and other tongues, and organize foreign language groups and churches. Language is not permitted to be a hindrance to the life and progress of the cults. To the contrary, it is generally regarded as a most helpful vehicle in the propagation of this gospel.

Perhaps one of the most important of all social factors contributing to the welfare of the cults is the press, augmented today to a considerable degree by the radio. The latter has

⁹ H. R. Niebuhr, *op. cit.*, p. 107.

greater publicity value than the press, as may be gathered from the enormous sums paid by commercial interests to the broadcasting companies. The Russellites, the Dowieites, the Unity School of Christianity, and the Four Square Gospel cult, among others, have their own radio broadcasting stations, while the Mormons and others broadcast regularly or occasionally over a large net-work of stations. But many of the smaller or less wealthy sects cannot meet the expenses which broadcasting entails and are, therefore, left to the press, the next best medium for advertising and propaganda purposes. In fact the press has played directly into the hands of the various cults. The newspapers have, for instance, given thousands of columns to discussions of the value and credibility of Spiritualism by its outstanding proponents.

The complete text of sermons, expositions, and addresses from Russellite and Christian Science sources appear weekly in newspapers of both urban and rural communities. Mary Baker Eddy's followers publish a daily newspaper of high ethical and social standards. Dowie's followers in Zion City issue a weekly newspaper which reaches subscribers throughout the whole country. Weekly and monthly periodicals and magazines have fairly teemed with stories describing, magnifying, or caricaturing the various cults. Most of the sects have their own official publications, printed very often in their own large and up-to-date printing plants. America is deluged with books, pamphlets, and tracts published by the cults, so that he who runs may read. Perhaps no cult can equal the Russellites in the output and the low cost of their publications. "Russellism has spread like scandal by means of the printed page."¹⁰ In 1925 alone more than two million copies of Pastor Russell's works were published. One work, "The Divine Plan of the Ages" has already passed the five million mark. Judge Rutherford, who is an author in his own name, and whose own works have already approached the ten million mark, estimates that over 13,502,000 books descriptive of the teachings of Russell have been sold or distributed. These figures almost stagger

¹⁰ C. W. Ferguson, *The Confusion of Tongues*, p. 72.

the imagination, but at the same time indicate how great a factor the printed page really is in the life of the cults.

Printer's ink may be black, but it certainly does reflect a great flood of light in the interest of America's tangent religions.

Chapter Four

THE HEGIRA FROM THE CHURCHES TO THE CULTS

"Was ever feather so lightly blown to and fro as this multitude?"
Shakespeare

The quintessence of sectarianism is not limited to "border-land cults" or to "fad denominations" because every denomination furnishes its quota. It is a crude mixture of bigotry, prejudice, jealousy, and intolerance; it is captious and divisive. In a city on the Pacific coast, it is reported, there is a church called "The Church of God." The members of this church quarreled with the result that a split off that old church called itself "The True Church of God." A quarrelsome faction in this second church soon became schismatic and a third church was organized calling itself "The Only True Church of God." If bigotry and sectarianism ever go to seed, here is an example *par excellence*.

It is just such a mind and spirit, unable to contain itself, which bubbles over and flows into the channels of the various cults. The malcontents easily fall prey to the alluring promises of paradise and glory which the cults hold out to them.

Converts to religion are not easily won, and after having been won are often even more difficult to hold. Three of the leading denominations in America report over eleven thousand churches which have failed to win a single convert during the year 1927. It has taken Christianity nineteen centuries to arrive where it is today, and while the battle lines are far flung, the Kingdom is not yet fully come. Not that the Church is forward-looking and backward-moving, but when its rate of growth is compared with that of some of the leading cults, reasons for serious thought are presented. It will be seen that the cults on a comparative basis are making greater strides than most churches. Increase of membership over a ten year period as revealed by the 1926 United States Government Cen-

sus of Religious Bodies is enlightening. The Christian Scientists show an increase of 67%, the Spiritualists 74 %, the Mormons 21%, the Theosophists 27%, the Pillar of Fire group 116%, and whereas seven bodies of the Mennonites report a decrease, ten others report an increase, with the result that for the entire group a net gain of 14% is shown. For other cults which enter into this study, save the Bahai group, which reports a loss of 57% and the communistic groups (Shakers and Amana Society) a loss of 17%, no statistics for comparison are available. But from every indication they are all prospering amidst unabated enthusiasm and enjoying moderate success.

Over against these cults we find that most, if not all the leading historic denominations have also shown an increase over the same period of time, but not nearly in so flattering proportions. The Northern Baptists report a gain of 8.3%, the Northern Methodists 9.8%, the United Lutherans 17.9%, and the Presbyterians, U. S. A., 16.5%. The Southern Baptists, Methodists and Presbyterians report somewhat more favorably with regard to their numerical advances.

With a membership of 202,098 the Christian Scientists have 140,566 in Sunday School, the Spiritualists with a membership of 50,631 have 5552 in Sunday School, and the Mormons with a membership of 606,561 have 209,593 in Sunday School. These figures show that a very high ratio obtains in the matter of instruction of the youth among the cults. Approximately the same ratio for Sunday School enrollment holds for fifteen other leading cults, while only the Shakers, the Amana Society, the Baha'is, and the Theosophists show a membership which is almost negligible.

It is a safe inference that the Sunday Schools of the cults furnish a considerable number of their members; but when other factors are taken into account, as well as the reports of almost all the pastors of the historic denominational churches, it becomes obvious that there are additional and even more important sources which provide the cults with their constituency and explain their phenomenal growth.

An analysis of the propaganda, the programs, and the missionary efforts of the cults discloses nothing more certainly than that the tactics used in winning new members, unethical as they very often are, are tried primarily upon the unsuspecting members of the evangelical churches. New faiths do not experiment on cannibal islands nor in the tropics, but work most diligently and most successfully in communities which are surcharged with moral and spiritual oxygen. In this respect they are all parasitic, living largely off the organized historic evangelical churches. "Ninety percent of the membership of the Christian Science church is estimated to come from the evangelical churches."¹ The conversion of the godless is not paramount in the work of the Mormon church. They do "not seek to convert sinners, but to make saints out of church members who already have a fair degree of saintliness."² It is estimated that three-fourths of the Spiritualists are still members of the various churches. This may be a somewhat high estimate unless by "members of the church" former or nominal members are meant. Nevertheless, the majority of the Spiritualists are drawn from the ranks of the churches.

Some of the cults, preaching a "Four-Square Gospel" imply thereby that other churches preach only, shall we say? a "triangular," hence a limited gospel, or a "multilateral" gospel which exceeds the commission given to them. The churches, they will not deny, preach some truth, but the whole Truth, they will maintain, is found only with them; and, having an exaggerated sense of responsibility for the souls of those who are feeding on the "milk of the Word," they labor with utmost zeal to stave off spiritual starvation by offering to them the "meat of the Gospel."

The Unity School of Christianity purports to be neither a sect nor a church. Its members are found everywhere, in the churches and out of them. Nor does it teach separation. It

¹ W. S. Woodhull, *Christian Science*, p. 56.

² E. L. Mills, *Mormonism Today*, *The Christian Century*, April 15, 1926, p. 478.

claims that men will be freed from sectarianism. The contention is doubtlessly true that most of its members are in the churches. And this establishes all the more securely the contention that the churches furnish the subjects for designing, benighted, or deluded teachers.

An unbiased investigation will reveal that almost the entire constituency of the cults springs from the churches where their members were nurtured in Christian teachings, only to be misinformed and misguided by over-zealous cult leaders and workers. Without almost any exception the cults are known to draw deeply upon established Christian reverence and faith.

Many of the cults do not, unlike the separatistic Christian Scientists, stress divorce from church relationships. This is a clever ruse, of course, but invariably the result is just such divorce. From the viewpoint of membership the churches become poorer and the cults richer by such tactics.

Various names have been assigned popularly to that shifting element in church memberships which proves especially gullible to the wiles of the cults, namely, church tramps, malcontents, grasshoppers, butterflies, transients. Not finding what they want in their own church they flit about until, like the fly in the spider-web, they soon find themselves enmeshed by the cults and lost to the church.

Curiosity, ill-health, trouble, desire for the sensational or the dramatic—all these motives and many more tempt church members to experiment with exotic religious teachings, and the usual result is that before long they are dropped from the church rolls because their "interests lie elsewhere." Few are the members in our churches who have any scholarly or critical knowledge of the historic or theological foundations of their faith, much less an empirical knowledge which assures them of the hope that is in them. And since the Bible is always "played up," its teachings stressed and interpreted, and the name of Jesus revered by the cults, some members feel it is perfectly safe to make an excursion now and then to some other "church." Thus they lack the power of discernment, or possessing it, fail to apply it in earnestness and honesty.

Health often means more to them than Methodism or Presbyterianism; gratification of their desires more than Lutheranism; an easy-going religious faith more than rigid Puritanism. If they can find what they want at less cost elsewhere, why not go there? They believe they can, and in the bosom of the cults they expect to find it.

Protestantism has supplied by far the larger number of the followers to the newer religious movements. The reason for this is perfectly clear. In the first place, so deeply ingrained in the soul of pious Catholics is the Roman church's doctrine of *extra ecclesiam nulla salus* that in spite of reason and truth the members do not readily fall away from the church; and even if they have become careless and indifferent, such ties still remain that a going over to the cults is almost entirely precluded. Secondly, the Catholic church has established convents and monasteries whither the heart-broken, the disappointed, the perplexed, and the over-pious may betake themselves. Thirdly, the lure of the faith-healing cults for Catholics is offset by the relief or cure which they may find at the shrines. Lourdes, Ste. Anne de Beaupré, Malden, Mass., and a host of other storehouses of miracle-working relics suggest competition equally as effectual as the formulas which the Christian Scientists and kindred faith-healing groups have to offer. In this way the Catholic church, unlike the Protestant, offers effective substitutes for the cults and their several attractions.

It is as interesting to know, as it is strange, that even Judaism is furnishing its share of devotees to certain of the cults. Among the hundreds of thousands who stampeded the Catholic cemetery at Malden, Mass., late in 1929, seeking health at the grave of a young Roman priest, were a goodly number of Jews. It is common knowledge that Christian Science also has its fascination for the Jews, many attending the meetings and calling in the practitioners. One of the newest cults is Jewish Science which has followed the cue set by Christian Science. It coincides in many respects with the tenets and methods of Mary Baker Eddy's system.

Proselyting is the chosen method of the cults. Holding out with the utmost zeal and conviction the profound assurances that the millenium will be ushered in with unprecedented dispatch, they find many ready for their doctrines and the tangible "fruits of the Spirit" which they offer.

The way to the cults is via the churches. Heaven seems to be nearer and more easily reached over that route.

PART TWO

RELIGIOUS CULTS AND SOCIAL ADJUSTMENT

Chapter Five

PATHOLOGICAL ASPECTS OF THE CULTS

"Such a life either atrophies the larger impulses of human nature or represses them to such a degree that they break out, from time to time, in gross and degrading forms of expression."
Cooley

Religion is an attempt at adjustment. The relationship of man with his fellowmen and with the Eternal constitutes its chief concern. It is no longer held that complete harmony must be deferred until the after-life, nor that man must die before he may realize heaven. Harmonious adjustment is possible here and now. Religion, worthy of the name, must be social and redemptive. In an attempt to effect adjustment it is just as essential to improve environment, to remove filth, vice, over-crowding, malnutrition, over-work, poverty, and dependency as it is to labor for human regeneration, to eliminate sin, and to purge men of their evil passions.

Every religious movement, however idealistic, will defeat itself unless it is prepared to subordinate abstruse theological doctrines and metaphysical questions to the practical and humanitarian gospel of the Man of Nazareth. An apologetic attitude for religion may be to the point in the class-room, but out on the frontiers where the battles of life are being waged, a religion is highly requisite which shall carry enlightened social values and social patterns, be an aid to high social morale, help create public opinion and clarify public conscience.

The great masses of society belong to what is generally designated as the normal classes, but they are not necessarily on the same level nor do they belong in the same category. The conduct of some people may not be exemplary nor their intelligence high, they may have kept themselves from serious entanglements and not have required the doles of charity. And while they may not have made any specific contribution to

social well-being they at least have not presented any serious problem.

But there are social groups and individuals that definitely impede the progress of society and as such they become the crux of the problem which arrests the attention of the students of society. As social pathologists study the diseases and defeats of society they seek to find the remedies where they exist and to reduce, if not eliminate altogether, the causes wherever possible. Such problematic groups or individuals may be criminal, vicious, delinquent, insane, diseased, poverty-stricken, unemployed, or exploited, but they do not, as such, constitute the only element in the problem of social defeat and the adjustment which it involves.

The social pathologist also takes into account such psychological factors as hysteria, undue and uncontrolled emotional disturbances and excitement which may create temporary madness or contribute to mob violence or any number of other possible excesses. Psychopathic factors are as important in the study of social ills as any physical or environmental problems or personal deficiencies although not usually as easily detected and analyzed.

When individual or group selfishness runs riot in our human world, or when sorrow and suffering resulting from maladjustment, whatever its cause, cries out to heaven, humanitarian religion is often found an effective means of social control. But its crowning achievement, like that of medical science, consists not in therapeutics but in preventive measures. It is less easy, however, to arouse enthusiasm for preventive measures than for those that cure. A far greater and nobler task is done when the causes which produce a constant stream of defectives, dependents, and delinquents are removed than when a cure is effected. Not until preventive salvation, rather than curative policies, commands the interest of the friends of society, will the highest efficiency be found in social service.

Religion is by its very nature largely preventive. Its mental and spiritual hygiene is its chief contribution to social

health, since maladjustment is as distinctly mental and spiritual as it is physical. But when religion itself is maladjusted it is pathological, and the rebuke, "Physician, heal thyself!" is well merited.

When in an effort to check plague and pestilence, prayer, fasting, and flagellation are substituted for sanitary measures, religion has become pathological. When theology becomes the bitter enemy of cocaine, quinine, chloroform, and anaesthetics in general, it is pathological. When inoculation as a preventive of smallpox was first presented, sermons and pamphlets appeared against "The Dangerous and Sinful Practice of Inoculation." This method of treatment was most strenuously denounced as "diabolical" and as "flying into the face of Providence." At this juncture religion becomes maladjusted and is pathological.

In our scientific age, Christian Science, Dowieism, New Thought, and all the rest of the mind and faith-cure cults which deride medical science are anomalies and aberrations which, with their strong atavistic tendencies, stand out as shining examples of religious maladjustment.

Christian Science, for instance, does serve a laudable purpose in effecting a degree of mental poise in neurotic and hysterical individuals, and so far deserves commendation for its work. We are prepared to concede that most of the cults have much good and truth in them, but here we are interested primarily in a catalogue of the weeds and briars as we chance upon them in the marshes or along the highway of religious experience.

When Christian Science denounces without qualification all modern medical science it lays itself open to the charge of being a public nuisance. As a writer says, speaking of the followers of Mary Baker Eddy, "when their faith makes them inhumane and blinds them to the most serious realities of life, tolerance becomes a questionable virtue if not a culpable vice. . . . When mothers sacrifice their children to 'science' and over their graves cling to the faith that slew them; when every community in the land is exposed to dire contagion by

the wilful neglect of the most elementary precautions in response to a belief that disease is a delusion of mortal mind—then the climax of the tale is reached and the role of charity difficult to maintain.”¹

Paganism in its mysteries gave free course to imaginary sensations that often culminated in hysteria and delirium. It has been a credit to the genius of Christianity to bring equilibrium into such derangements, so that hysterolepilepsy is now to be found almost exclusively among the turbulent Pentecostal sects. Holy dancing, strange contortions of the body and speaking in strange tongues are not the sane and healthy signs of a religion which will make universal appeal. Out of such delusions go extravagance and excess.

In certain mountain districts of Pennsylvania the deluded members of this “exploding humanity” cult are given to the practice of covering the forms of both men and women lying prostrate on the floor with blankets. This they believe is not only the humane thing to do, but also a safe procedure, since during that time the victims are unable to sin. Among certain Southern groups of the Holy Rollers the entranced are known to have been carried out in pairs of opposite sex and laid on the floor of the unoccupied church stables.

Religious hysteria, though in a milder form, may be detected in the Mormon religion. It also plays up to the spectacular and the dramatic. “Mormonism keeps its adherents in a perpetual state of spiritual enthusiasms by promising everything to the present generation. It is a ‘last days’ preparation for a ‘winding up scene’ always a decade or two away. Hence the Mormon is a Latter Day Saint who expects to live to see dreadful, spectacular, and glorious events that are to accompany the gathering of Israel to a region of Utah, the destruction of all the wicked who refuse to accept the gospel.”²

¹ Joseph Jastrow, Book Review in *The Nation*, Feb. 10, 1926, p. 156.

² M. E. King, Utah: Apocalypse of the Desert, *The Nation*, June 28, 1922, p. 767.

There is a strange admixture of excessive emotionalism and superstition which is hard to eliminate from religious beliefs and practices. Like cataleptic conditions, convulsions, and trances, they are not integral parts of religion, but to the contrary, like all chronic religious excitement, constitute a real danger to the higher and nobler expressions of an honest and devout nature.

The hallucinations and superstitions of mankind with belief in ghosts and apparitions, supported by Old Testament stories of communication with the spirits of the dead laid the foundation of modern Spiritualism. As a religion with its trance, seance, clairvoyance, and clairsaudience, it is preponderately pathological. As competent scientific students diligently apply themselves to an analysis and explanation of psychic forces, this religion, purporting to be in touch with the spirit-world, is being discredited. Most of what the Spiritualists hawk as religious revelations coming from the dead can be explained on the basis of the laws of suggestion. Ignorance of these laws makes easy converts of the credulous, who visit the seance in search of solace or encouragement in some extremity. Magicians can duplicate the tricks of fraudulent mediums, without becoming self-hypnotized as the latter usually are while in a trance.

Disastrous moral and social results ensue from Spiritualistic practices. It destroys the will and develops the sentimental and the temperamental. It destroys the calm and inflames with excitement. Disappointment, heart-ache, shame, nervous conditions, instability, insanity, and suicide are some of the fruits that this cult is capable of producing. Nervous, erratic, and fickle individuals seize greedily on anything which is vague or mysterious, and "with a fervor which does more credit to their credulity than to their intellect." Their psychical unbalance is apparent.

As this cult has sought to spiritualize psychic forces, so Mary Baker Eddy appropriating Dr. Quimby's system of healing, "spiritualized his mesmerism and made Christianity

out of his practice.”³ Absurdities and extravagances to which adherence to the doctrines of the cults lead are not uncommon. “It is not surprising,” says Ferguson,⁴ “that a religion which sprang from Mrs. Eddy should be given to amusing, but illogical excesses. There is the case of Mrs. Josephine Curtis Woodbury who gave birth in 1890 to a son whom followers believed to be the result of an immaculate conception, in perfect accord with Mrs. Eddy’s theory of producing life by mental generation.” That Mrs. Woodbury was forthwith denounced by Mrs. Eddy does not in the least detract from the unsavory and morbid excesses that inhere in the religion which she foisted upon the world.

The story of a similar absurdity attaches itself to one, Joanna Southart, who appeared as the first angelic messenger and was regarded as a forerunner of Benjamin Purnell’s cult of the House of David. Having come to the end of her career she announced that she would on a certain day bear a son of divine origin. When the designated hour had arrived she went into a trance which proved to be fatal, and another “miscarriage of immaculate conception” graces the record of religious follies.⁵

Religious fanaticism suggests psychical abnormality. An excessive and frenzied activity, produced by a strong will and a weak and narrow mind, always leads to maladjustment. It gives us the Doukhobors, who because of inordinate kindness to dumb animals, pull their own farm implements rather than hitch an ox or a horse to them. When a woodchuck begins to destroy their gardens, these religious extremists, refusing to kill any living thing will chase it onto their neighbor’s property and permit responsibility for its disposition to rest with him.

The members of the ascetical House of David, who refuse to cut their hair or shave their beards, hold, like the Shakers, that evil is inherent in sexual intercourse. Yet they tolerated

³ C. W. Ferguson, *The Confusion of Tongues*, p. 180.

⁴ *Ibid*, p. 209.

⁵ *Vd. Ibid*, p. 51.

the fraudulent and adroit use of religion as a means of gratifying the sex impulses of their leader. The ascetic tendencies of this cult furnish little incentive for marriage and put normal courtship under the ban. The morality of the members of this cult may conflict with that of the outer world, but that does not engender any compunctions of conscience in them. An evidence of this may be seen in their willingness to perjure themselves on the witness-stand in defense of the leader of their faith when he had come into conflict with the laws of the community.

The passion for money furnishes the motive for various types of anti-social behavior. Though not necessarily always the immediate cause, nevertheless in one respect or another this motive may be found lurking behind almost every social maladjustment, whether it be suffering, privation, dependency, vice, or crime. To succeed or to prevail at another's expense may be in keeping with the theory of the survival of the fit, but such an attitude is not born of a social mind, nor is it ethical. When this inordinate desire for possessions results in misdirected or undirected human activity conducive to maladjustment, it may be regarded as being no more pathological than when it is discovered in religion. Commercialization of religion, on a par with that of the human body, of sport, or of talent, lends itself to extravagant tendencies. It is just here, in the capitalizing of their doctrines that some of the cults show an amazing proficiency and lay themselves open to criticism.

What G. G. Atkins calls "The Gospel of Getting On," promulgated by New Thought intimates in a pithy manner how religion can be prostituted for ulterior purposes. The apostles of this gospel stress a creed of self-assertiveness which too often leads not to constructive ends but to collision and conflict. Courses guaranteed to produce personality, financial success, and happiness are advertised in widely read magazines. Other advertisements suggest that "wherever there are people in mental, physical, or soul distress, there is lucrative practice for our graduates. The returns of the first client

have in many cases been larger than the price of the whole course.”⁶ Not that greater assertiveness and personal initiative are without merit or benefit in many lives, but when such a traffic is conducted in the name of religion and for personal gain we become aware of a morbid aspect of this cult which is earnestly to be deplored.

In an issue of “The Herald of Christian Science”⁷ there appears an advertisement suggestive of the profit that religion of a kind may produce. It reads in part: “Members of the Mother Church engaged in the healing work of Christian Science . . . may present applications for cards in this new Herald. . . . Applicants should be able to speak and write English. The rate for a practitioner’s card will be one dollar a line.” Practitioners have found their system of healing lucrative, even though its spirit is so wholly unlike the Great Physician who healed without gold and without price.

It may perhaps be uncharitable to criticize Mary Baker Eddy’s students if they should want to receive adequate returns with interest for their investment of three hundred dollars which a twelve lesson course in the art of healing involved. But in the light of all this it does seem significant that the Massachusetts legislature should put an end to Mrs. Eddy’s diploma mill which netted her an income of \$7500 a day.⁸ She lived in opulence, traveled in state and died one of the wealthiest women of her time. It is but natural that Christian Science with its churches generally located in the finer sections of urban communities should find its greatest following among people of means, and not strange that practitioners should not fail to lose sight of the fee which the healing that they dispensed allows.

Many members of erratic cults and their leaders have frequently been subjected to persecution and even martyrdom. Such treatment always produces an unhealthy state of mind, a martyr complex which is pathological. It engenders mor-

⁶ *Ibid*, p. 177.

⁷ Sept. 1929, p. 277.

⁸ Vd. J. V. Coombs, *Religious Delusions*, pp. 155, 156.

bid sentimentalism, and commands a loyalty that is easily fanned into hysterical excesses.

Aimee McPherson Hutton is a case in point. Here is a phenomenal personality, shrewd, magnetic, and enthusiastic, a vaudevillian full of animal magnetism making the most of the sex appeal. Her followers worship in a magnificently appointed temple which has a weekly payroll of over \$7000. Involved in all kinds of litigation, her reputation maligned, and libelous scandal attaching to her name, she claims to have been made the scapegoat of political powers. Civic crusades are formed to suppress her. But all this she dismisses ingeniously with the avowal that the gates of hell have been thrown open and that Satan with the hounds of perdition have been given exit to prevail against her. Convinced that she is being subjected to persecution and to the tactics of wilful martyrizers, she creates an enthusiasm of devotion on the part of her followers that is perfectly amazing. The tragic thing of it all is that she is so adept in capitalizing her persecution, that the hands which are uplifted in ecstatic hallelujahs also reach down into the pockets at her behest to bring forth funds amply sufficient to meet all budget demands.

The excesses, reckless extravagances and morbid passions so far touched upon are those of the so-called respectable though erratic cults. It falls to the lot of the rabid cults, however, to portray most graphically how pathological some religious demonstrations and techniques really can become.

A mystic cult, redundant with chants and intonations and with its prophets, twenty-two temples, and 20,000 members scattered through many negro communities of the country, came into a bad way in Chicago when a thousand police were rushed into the trouble-area in an effort to prevent a race riot.⁹ Two officers were killed before the cult was driven out. A year previous to this conflict the leader of the "Guardians of the Garden of Allah," was murdered by worshippers in front of one of their temples. His martyrdom gave new life

⁹ Press Dispatch, reported by Pierre J. Huss in *Paterson Evening News*, Oct. 16, 1929.

to the movement; but while it still flourishes, it is making no contribution whatever to cordial race relations nor to the advancement of their own racial group.

Lewis Browne, an authority on religious cults and manifestations estimates that there are three or four hundred cults and more than 100,000 people in Southern California who with primitive mentality believe that certain secrets are revealed to certain people by angels. In the latter part of 1929, a cult founded by a Mrs. Mary Otis Blackburn, calling itself "The Divine Order of the Royal Arm of the Great Eleven," became the object of police investigation in Los Angeles. Mrs. Blackburn waited some five years for an "inspiration" from the angel Gabriel to publish a book which was to disclose the "lost measurements" leading to rich gold and petroleum deposits.

In the Santa Susanna mountains where this "high priestess" held forth, a healing rite was observed in which an aged woman member of this cult was baked to death in an effort to cure her of an illness. Seven dogs were buried beside the steel casket of another deceased member of this cult symbolizing the seven tones of Gabriel's trumpet as he proclaimed the resurrection. This cultist's fundamental religious tenet is that the angel Gabriel commanded her to do whatever she has done.

Such wierd, fanatical religious excesses might be multiplied almost without number, witnessing to the fact that both the peasant mind, and the better trained intellect, gullible to the mysterious, are still to be found in the twentieth century civilization of enlightened America.

When volitional control is lost or mystification is confused with mysticism; when men's innate desire for health and wealth and happiness is exploited for personal gain; when occultism is sufficient to thrill the fibres of the body or purports to bring men into touch with the departed, then the pathological conditions in the religious expression of the cults serve amply to illustrate the tendencies which develop when religion becomes debased.

Chapter Six

THE SOCIAL SIGNIFICANCE OF FAITH-HEALING CULTS

"Our remedies oft in ourselves do lie,
Which we ascribe to Heaven."

—Shakespeare

Ill-health, whatever its cause, still presents one of the major factors in the program of social adjustment. Inevitable disease is pathetic; but the exactions which preventable diseases make border on the tragic. It is conservatively estimated that there are always three million persons on the sick list, and reputable economists have variously estimated the loss to the people of the United States from disease and resultant death anywhere from one to two billion dollars annually. To estimate, however, the loss of such potential power on a commercial basis is to do so on a low plane. If that were the only loss, it might be compensated for in other ways, but it is the "social cost" aspect, the suppression or loss of potential ability, which is so appalling.

Preventable disease has robbed families of their main support, has compelled widows and children to face the hardships of industry, has stunted the growth of youth and deprived them of the advantages which inalienably are theirs, and has helped create ignorance, shiftlessness, poverty, vagrancy, and crime.¹ To face such destiny stoically would be justifiable were much of this not preventable, but such social loss is largely inexcusable because preventive social co-operation can minimize, if not largely eliminate, the most of human suffering and prevent the maladjustment which usually ensues.

The health problem which has become more and more acute with the rapid development of our material and cultural civ-

¹ Cf. E. C. Hayes, *Introduction to the Study of Sociology*, pp. 285-87.

ilization is placing humanity under a constantly increasing strain. The human mechanism breaks down under the exactions of our rapidly moving age. Unpreventable or, thus far, incurable disease has slain its thousands, but preventable disease has preyed upon its tens of thousands. It is just this which makes the health problem so intensely tragic.

As long as there is suffering and death, religion will abide as a source of sympathy and of consolation, as well as of encouragement. Religion has always concerned itself with matters of ill-health, but unfortunately not always constructively—indeed and alas! at times antagonistically.

The early and the medieval Church, deeply sympathetic with the wretched in mind, body, and soul, did, nevertheless, retard the benefits which scientific treatment of illness affords and which today are coming to the fore. With the Church placing its major, or at least disproportionate emphasis upon the soul, at the expense of the body, it became an easy matter for the theologians to press the doctrine that ill-health, misfortune, or tragedy were the direct chastisement of God for sins committed. A modern echo of this medievalistic theology is heard in the pronouncement of the Bishops of Naples, Genoa, and Milan, all cardinals, in the summer of 1930 relative to the earthquake in southern Italy in which 2200 lives were destroyed. According to these church dignitaries and supported by the Pope's own organ, "*L'Osservatore Romano*," this tragedy was a visitation of God on the sinful people for their corrupt morals and immodesty of dress.²

Because of the limited or narrow conception held regarding bodily resurrection, it was almost impossible to lay hold on new knowledge which is ascertained through post-mortem examination or dissection. Truth was sacrificed upon the altar of creedal statements and pronouncements.³

The experiences of Andrew Vesalius, who is spoken of as "the founder of the modern science of anatomy" are to the

² Vd. *The Christian Century*, Aug. 13, 1930, p. 980.

³ Vd. G. G. Atkins, *Modern Religious Cults and Movements*, pp. 99, 100.

point. Except for the protection and patronage of Charles V. he could never have pursued his anatomical studies in the face of the opposition and persecution of the Church. Faithful in his quest for truth he was finally banished and lost to the world, having made humanity his debtor, however, by his intensive studies and relentless research. Inoculation and vaccination had no less opposition to face. Theological conservatism also withheld for a long time "the greatest single blessing ever given surgery" by impeding the use of anaesthetics.⁴

It is different today. The scourges of mankind, so common not many years ago, have today been wiped out. Malaria has virtually disappeared where preventive measures have been applied, and small pox has been practically vanquished wherever vaccination is general. A different vaccine prevents typhoid. Yellow fever, hookworm, and tuberculosis have come under control by scientific and common-sense measures through exercise of social caution and the co-operative efforts of society with the medical profession. Diabetis, Bright's disease, cancer, and certain diseases of the heart are still baffling the medical world. The Church, however, is no longer antagonistic or indifferent to medical progress,—to the contrary, is co-operating through its social gospel to not only salvage but to prevent social maladjustment as it is occasioned by sickness and disease.

The physician is familiar with cases which medicine cannot cure, but which he knows psychiatry or religion are able to help. Drug addicts, for example, need religion as much as medicine, more so, in fact. On the other hand, every clergyman also knows that the only cure for certain cases of illness is that which experienced medical men can normally effect. When once ways and means have been found through organized social co-operation, the agency of government, the school, the press, and the Church can be commanded to make available the therapeutic methods evolved by those profes-

⁴ Cf. *Ibid*, pp. 101, 102.

sions whose specific task it is to cure the ills that humanity is heir to.

The subject of health has always been germane to religion in one way or another. That there are other remedial agencies than medicine is the expressed conviction of the most primitive religions and of the most modern cults. The witch-doctor beats his drum, weaves his charm or holds forth his sacred fetish. Various elements in the healing ministry of Jesus, who came to save the body as well as the soul, and the recommendation of the Apostle James that the anointing with oil accompany the prayer of faith in the cure of the sick are prefatory to the discovery of the psychotherapeutical factors so prominently stressed by modern cultists in the preservation and restoration of health.

So-called faith cures need not be disparaged altogether, but at that, one cannot be too skeptical about them. We never read advertisements about the failures in such attempted cures. "There are no testimony meetings of the uncured."

Many physical ills have a moral significance, are therefore social, and afford sociology, as well as religion, an object of intense interest because of the readjustment which any legitimate cure makes necessary, or because of the effect that alleged miraculous cures may have upon the individual or the community.

Faith-healing has always received a vital stimulus through the elaborate Roman Catholic tradition of miraculous cures which are sustained by pilgrimages to shrines, supplication to the saints, or by the alleged threapeutical virtue of innumerable relics. The grotto at Lourdes, France, (not to say a word about Einsiedeln, St. Anne de Beaupré, Gaudalupe and a score of lesser shrines) attracted more than five million people in the first fifty years of its popularity and on an average of one million a year in the last two decades.

The Catholic Encyclopedia, in an article on Lourdes, is authority for saying that from 1858 to 1908, 4000 cures had been effected at this shrine. Professor R. M. Binder, on the basis of a fair assumption, estimates that of the five mil-

lion registered visitors at this shrine about one million were actual health seekers, and that thus approximately 0.4 of one percent, or one in 250 could lay claim to cure or help. This, it will be seen, observes Professor Binder, is a very small ratio. He adds that "most of the cures actually accomplished are attested or certified. The value of these attestations need not be impunged; a year is expected to elapse between the cure and the issue of the certificates. The physicians issuing them are undoubtedly honest. Whether they are always right is another question. In many nervous ailments diagnosis is very difficult; in certain organic diseases it is perhaps more so. . . . The hundreds of certificates at Lourdes do not lie; they simply do not tell the truth, because the truth in these particular cases is not known."⁵

They are legion, who like the "wicked and adulterous generation" of Jesus' day, seek signs in support of a faith which, though weighed and found wanting, they are, nevertheless, reluctant to let go. Many are confused religiously. Frequently dominated by a fear complex they are prepared to accept the most preposterous illusions or wild claims made in the name of religion, rather than discard the last vestiges of religious faith and belief and sink into agnosticism or abject atheism. For them the lessons of history hold little in store. Their wishful thinking makes fertile soil for the seed cast abroad by the dispensers of miraculous power, especially so in the field of physical healing.

There are unconscious impulses and emotional experiences which make man naturally religious. Being a natural philosopher he is deeply concerned about the whence, the why, and the whither of his own existence. He is mentally and socially so constituted that it is a most natural thing for him to be religious.⁶

It is unfortunate, however, that man's religiosity is often but a step removed from credulity; and the credulous mind

⁵ Vd. R. M. Binder, *Religion As Man's Completion*, pp. 270-73.

⁶ Vd. G. B. Cutten, *The Psychological Phenomena of Christianity*, p. 19.

always presents an interesting, though often pathetic object for study. But while it may be, then, that man is, as Sabatier says, "incurably religious," it can hardly be gainsaid that actual benefits would most certainly devolve upon a great sector of "this believing world," should a definite "cure" or elimination be effected of some of the brands of religious belief which hold countless numbers in unquestioned spiritual, intellectual, and social bondage.

In "an analysis of the confusion of modern men and an attempt to reconstruct a credible basis for their ideals," Walter Lippmann contends that "modern man has ceased to believe in it (the Gospel) but he has not ceased to be credulous, and the need to believe haunts him. It is no wonder that his impulse is to turn back from his freedom, and to find some one who says he knows the truth and can tell him what to do, to find the shrine of some new god, of any cult however new-fangled, where he can kneel and be comforted, put on manacles to keep his hands from trembling, esconce himself in some citadel where it is safe and warm."⁷

Whether or not we agree in entirety with Mr. Lippmann, there is no evasion of the fact that the profusion of modern religious cults does attest man's insatiable credulity and his innate craving for the religious. The phantom "conflict between science and religion" has afforded no little concern to many religiously minded of recent generations, who, in their apparent bewilderment, have sought feverishly to reconcile the one with the other. Religious excesses and deviations of various kinds and degrees have been consequent.

Science, having been heralded abroad as a new revelation and as a positive panacea, has found many perplexed souls beating a path to its doors. Various scheming charlatans and selfish egoists, believing themselves to be wise, have proceeded to make a new potion for the gods and have beguiled credulous worshippers by popularizing religiously some of the discoveries or tenets of scientific procedures. As Mr. Lippmann

⁷ *A Preface to Morals*, p. 9.

says "cults have attached themselves to scientific hypotheses as fortune-tellers to a circus. . . . These cults are an attempt to fit working theories of science to the ordinary man's desire for personal salvation."⁸

But men are interested not only in personal salvation after death. Much oftener they concern themselves with their salvation on this side of the grave, the deliverance from a host of ills, both of the flesh and of the social order. Mail-order cults which purport to dispense personality for a financial consideration or renewed health by day or night, either by telegraph or mail, stand out as an affirmation of the fact.

Those wretched souls, who are sensitive to criticism and scorn, and who have unsuccessfully tried every legitimate and common-sense method of healing, will often be found to be secretly lending an ear to the illusive assurances which their expectant though unanalytical minds are so ready to accept.

The simplest philosophy concerning the extremes, which are incident to the world in which we live and which are to be accepted as part of the hazards of life, be they the result of drought, cataclysm, or broken health, seem to be foreign to such credulous minds which are held in bondage by the grotesque nature of their religious concepts.

The Unity School of Christianity is enjoying phenomenal financial success, as it dispenses "cures" to tens of thousands throughout the country, making no fixed charge for its ministry, but encouraging love or thank-offerings. The gullibility of suffering and distracted humanity is made manifest by its readiness to give of its substance in return for such promises as renewed health or prosperity.

Adherents of the cult of Unity mail requests to headquarters for prayer for health, rain, or prosperity. Such a correspondent writes, "Sometime ago I wrote you and asked prayers for my eyes. I committed to memory the Truth statement that you sent me and repeated it constantly. I am very thankful for the blessings I have received. My eyes are clear

⁸ *Ibid*, p. 125.

and my sight is restored. I do not think of using glasses.”⁹

One of the leaves of the monthly edition of *Unity* for February 1906 is of red paper. On the sheet is printed the following: “This sheet has been treated by the Society of Silent Unity, after the manner mentioned in Acts 19:11, 12. Disease will depart from those who repeat silently, while holding this in hand, the words printed hereon.” And these are the words: “Affirmation for strength and power. February 20th to March 20th. (Held daily at nine P. M.) The strength and power of Divine Mind are now established in the midst of me; and shall go no more out.” In this same issue are found testimonials to the value of such suggestions. Two of such are: “While holding the Red Leaf between my hands it caused vibrations through my whole system and rheumatic pains that I was troubled with disappeared as if by magic. M. T. R.” “Your Red Sheet of November I used in treating my sister for appendicitis, and also for myself for sore throat. With the December one I treated myself for sore throat and bronchitis, with wonderful results in both and in all cases. L. V. D.”

Claim for the possession of therapeutic powers is made for these monthly healing thoughts which are to be memorized and constantly repeated like so many *Ave Marias* and *Pater Nosters*. Another such thought is, “Through Christ I am steadfast in my spiritual consciousness of the unfailing help and strength of God.”¹⁰

By substitution of the word “prosperity” for “health and strength” the therapeutic values of the otherwise identical statement is changed into a “prosperity thought,” which enables one to sell his property, increase the value of stock, rent furnished rooms, locate new positions and open bank accounts. “Your treatment for prosperity has done us so much good, and we are feeling more prosperous, which will open the way to our receiving more. Since our treatment our chickens have laid better, the food goes further and our whole living

⁹ *Weekly Unity*, Nov. 17, 1928, p. 5.

¹⁰ *Ibid*, Nov. 3, 1928, p. 5.

seems easier.”¹¹ G. B. Cutten, in commenting on this and similar testimonials says, “it is to be expected that so long as the chickens and people respond so readily to the most naïve and crass forms of suggestion, there will always be found those willing to give the suggestions for a consideration.”¹²

Unity School does not insist, but it advises its students and followers to desist from a meat diet, and by following vegetarian diet they are presumed to find greater spiritual benefit and, incidentally, greater health.

Closely akin to this system of healing is that propagated by the various cults of Hindu religious philosophy, which have gained quite a foothold in this country. The Yoga philosophy was presented to America by Swami (Teacher) Vivekananda, the first and greatest zealot of the East on the occasion of his visit in Chicago in 1893 to attend the Parliament of Religion. But his success at inoculating certain groups of credulous Americans, who were easily duped by the fad mania, compares unfavorably with that of Swami Yogananda. He made his advent to America in 1920, coming to Boston to attend the International Congress of Religions. His headquarters are in Lower California, where almost every cult enjoys a prodigious growth. Here, too, stands the Mount Washington Center of Yogoda and Sat-Sanga.

Daily at seven in the morning Divine Healing Prayer is sent out by the Swami to the students of his religious philosophy and to “all others held in bondage by physical and mental diseases or the spiritual suffering of ignorance.” By communicating with headquarters and imparting information descriptive of one’s ailment and its nature, anyone may profit by this Vibration. Testimony giving credit to the therapeutic value of the philosophy and teachings of the Swamis and Yogis exists in abundance. C. W. Ferguson¹³ cites numerous such cases. There is, for instance, one who writes, “I have

¹¹ *Monthly Unity*, February, 1906.

¹² *Op. cit.*, p. 221.

¹³ *The Confusion of Tongues*, p. 318.

had four years of every treatment known to medical science and all isms besides. I have received my first help from Yogoda." A knee-cap is replaced after every other means of help has failed for sixteen years according to the testimony of another. A further attestation reads, "I have recovered almost entirely from nervousness; my eyesight is better and I am now able to have the use of my right ear for the first time in three years."

The "renaissance of faith-healing" in our day is best approached through the individual healers. Even George Fox and John Wesley have credit for miraculous cures ascribed to them. At a later day John Alexander Dowie, A. B. Simpson, C. G. Finney, Prince Hohenlohe, and Aimee McPherson Hutton are added to the list.

Divine healing is "the special stock in trade" of the cult called "The Christian Catholic Apostolic Church in Zion," founded by John Alexander Dowie. He was born in Scotland and before coming to the United States in 1888 at the age of forty-one he labored for a long period of years in Australia. His advent was well timed. The numerous collapsing cults furnished him with ready followers. His arrogant autocracy was no deterrent to them as they formed themselves into the nucleus of his new church, and joined him as well in his business ventures. It was while in Australia that he became conscious of what he believed to be the power to heal the physically afflicted by the laying on of hands. Undaunted by the virulent attacks of Pacific Coast clergy he continued his healing practices, producing testimonials which he held to be indispensable evidence of his power to heal. Being a man whose personal character was not above reproach, he was quick to advance his personal interests as well as those of his newly founded church by reports of his cures, which were frequently distorted and lied about.¹⁴

Dowie was sufficiently wise to admit the existence of disease and did not, like the Christian Scientists, explain it away. His religious system admitted of disease and recognized the

¹⁴ Cf. G. Seldes, *The Stammering Century*, pp. 390, 391.

dangers involved. The use of medicine, however, he held to be both superfluous and sinful; faith and prayer alone were sufficient. Holding consistently and tenaciously to his theories he soon brought the wrath of Chicago physicians upon his head. The medical fraternity, viewing with apprehension his baneful influence in the matters of public health, proceeded forthwith to prosecute him, and hailed him before the courts to face over one hundred specific charges. Dowie appealed successfully to the higher courts, and as a result the city ordinance upon which the charges were based, was declared to be invalid. When, in due time, he founded his own community, Zion City, in Illinois, he forbade the presence of any physician as well as the use of all drugs within its confines.

In Chicago it was thought that Dowie's influence and power would come to an end as the result of his failure to save his favorite daughter, Esther, a comely young woman, from death by burning. While it did cause great sorrow, it did not create even so much as a whimper of criticism nor doubt among his followers in Zion. Having arisen early one morning in May she lighted an alcohol lamp to heat a curling iron, when the wind blew her nightdress into the flame. She was fatally burned, suffering excruciatingly for twelve long hours. While some reports have it that no doctor was in attendance during that time, more reliable reports seem to indicate that a licensed physician by the name of Speicher, himself a convert to Dowieism, was permitted to apply vaseline and bandages to her burns. Here Dowie in an extreme situation which supremely tested his anti-medical theories, capitulated—but as any normal father, he ought not be too severely criticised for his personal inconsistency. "Heartbroken, Dowie said over his daughter's grave, 'She was a good girl, but she disobeyed me. I forbade the use of alcohol in any form, she violated my command, and she has been punished for it.'"¹⁵

Strongly entrenched in the cult of faith-healing are the Pentacostalists or Holy Rollers, who are prepared to furnish

¹⁵ *Ibid*, p. 391.

a long list of cures ascribed to the Holy Ghost, not the least of which are blindness, hydrophobia, cancer, Bright's Disease, female troubles and spasms. Indeed, in an autobiography by Mary B. Woodworth-Etter, the claims are made to the raising of two women from the dead.

The Mormons, up to the early seventies of the last century, had relied for healing almost entirely upon prayer and the anointing with oil. Joseph Smith, Jr. began his healing career as an exorcist, having by command cast the devil out of one, Newel Knight of Colesville, N. Y. Thus encouraged in his success as an exorcist, it was an easy step for him and his followers to venture upon the healing of the ills of the flesh. They subsequently pointed with pride to numerous well-attested faith-cures.¹⁶

While Christian Science draws the line when it comes to the setting of broken bones, advising that this be left to physicians, the Mormon elders were more potent, if not more brazen to furnish competition to the medical fraternity. "Elder Richards advertised in England 'Bones set through faith in Jesus Christ.' and Elder Phillips made the additional statement that 'while commanding the bones, they came together making a noise like the crushing of an old basket.' All forms of diseases were treated, but not always successfully, as may be inferred from Smith's own words: 'The cholera burst forth among us, even those on guard fell to earth with their guns in their hands. . . . At the commencement I attempted to lay on hands for their recovery, but I quickly learned by painful experience, that when the Great Jehovah decrees destruction upon any people, makes known his determination, man must not attempt to stay his hand.'" ¹⁷

When the Episcopalians came to Salt Lake City and founded St. Mark's Hospital, they met with no little opposition, as may well have been expected. However, in health matters the Latter Day Saints have learned to bow to the dictates

¹⁶ Vd. G. B. Cutten, *Three Thousand Years of Mental Healing*, p. 286.

¹⁷ *Ibid*, p. 287.

of common-sense, and consequently they have come to own and control three large and efficient hospitals.

Strictly speaking, New Thought is not a faith-healing but a mind-healing cult. Since its system seeks to assure health by the drugless methods which have some therapeutic values it deserves mention here. In its teachings mind is everything and disease an imposter. Unlike Christian Science, New Thought does not deny matter, but attempts to spiritualize it; so with sin, sickness, and death,—they are not denied, but simply limited in existence. Their ultimate defeat is certain through right thinking, hence right living. In recent years New Thought therapeutics have gradually gone into decline, with major emphasis being placed upon the gospel of material prosperity.

Angelus Temple in Los Angeles has witnessed alleged faith-cures almost without number at the hands of Aimee McPherson Hutton. This cultist uses both mechanics and psychology in her healing services. The maimed, the halt, and the blind at a psychological moment are brought forward, and upon confession of their faith in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ they are commanded to walk or to see. At this juncture the organ in transcending paens of praise thunders forth, "All Hail the Power of Jesus' Name," and the assembled multitudes respond with a thunderous hallelujah. Cures here are purported to be instantaneous and miraculous.

And more—the Spiritualists also claim not only the prerogative, but also the ability to effect cures through the power of the medium. It is simply a matter of setting up communication with the spirit-world where faithful physicians, still travailing in their souls for the physical health of mortals on earth, can be inveigled to impart their "post-graduate" knowledge gained in the spirit-world for a nominal financial consideration made to solicitous mediums. Loved ones dwelling where there is no more suffering and no more death are also prevailed upon to guide their earthly loved ones with a message of healing.¹⁸

¹⁸ Cf. J. J. Walsh, *Cures*, pp. 200, 201.

Sir Conan Doyle on an American lecture tour related the experiences of his brother's widow, illustrative of the powers of spiritualistic medical communication. She, suffering severely with an ailment of which he claims to have been entirely ignorant, receives a message from her husband, imparting information as to the illness and suggesting that she consult a particular healer who cured by certain magnetic powers which he possessed. To be sure, she complied with the instructions coming from the spirit-world and was "cured."¹⁹

But the palm for faith-healing goes unquestionably to Christian Science. It remains for this cult to show to the world how credulous and gullible people really are, and how utterly foolish and absolutely anti-social non-medical cures may often prove to be.

Pretentious religion and quack-medicine have always had a joint interest in the despoiling of the physically afflicted, or those who failed adequately to reconcile their suffering with the benevolence of an omnipotent God. "Christian Science is not anything new, not even in its trade-name. Mrs. Eddy is by no means the first 'healer' with a mission to make name, fame, and fortune out of the credulity of suffering humanity."²⁰

Christian Science is preponderately a system of healing. The fact that a pseudo-Christian theology is postulated as the *sine qua non* of cures from physical ailments does not invalidate the State laws which stipulate that a certain minimum of educational prerequisites must be met by all medical practitioners. But with these laws Christian Scientists are unwilling to comply. A pious faith does not excuse willful ignorance nor incompetence in dealing with human life. The law does not discriminate against religious freedom, but it does take cognizance of the progressive advance made in the field of medicine and the benefits which accrue to suffering humanity from sane and sensible use of the same.

¹⁹ Cf. *Ibid*, p. 201.

²⁰ W. Riley, F. W. Peabody, C. E. Humiston, *The Faith, Falsity and Failure of Christian Science*, p. 300.

When it is claimed for faith-cures that they have been wrought in such cases in which "specialists have given up" the sufferers to die, an expert medical man can usually discover that diagnosis has been superficial or made by wholly incompetent persons. Autopsies and post-mortem examinations always reveal that religious faith is insufficient to diagnose human ills. No wonder that they are held in utter disdain by the adherents of this cult.

Christian Science is a menace to society because ignorant quacks under the garb of religion are permitted to trifle with life. "The harm of Christian Science lies in its profoundly obtuse inability to discriminate between real and imaginary disease. . . . But the tragedy of Christian Science lies in its arrogant and pernicious activity in undertaking the management of that great group of diseases wherein favorable outcome can confidently be expected to follow the timely use of proper medical or surgical treatment, but which through reliance upon Christian Science is doomed to certain disaster."²¹ There is scarcely a community anywhere which cannot point to the graves of the victims of these malpractitioners.

They may be pious after a fashion, but certainly woefully unenlightened, who, when a little child, dying of pneumonia is forced to keep up and about and beg for a moment's respite from exhaustion in her mother's lap, repulse her with "run along and play with sister."²² Yet such are no more piously ignorant than those who promulgate a doctrine in which soap and water are regarded as unessential in cleanliness and health. "The daily ablutions of an infant are no more natural nor necessary than would be the process of taking a fish out of water every day and covering it with dirt in order to make it thrive more vigorously in its own element."²³ Equally preposterous is the claim that "the less we know or think about hygiene, the less we are predisposed to sickness."²⁴

²¹ *Ibid*, p. 305.

²³ M. B. Eddy, *Science and Health*, p. 413.

²² *Vd. Ibid*, p. 340.

²⁴ *Ibid*, p. 389.

No scientific training nor knowledge of textual criticism is necessary for even the layman to detect that all the testimonies offered in support of alleged cures, and which comprise the last one hundred pages of *Science and Health*, appear in uniformly good English and have been carefully edited or rewritten. They should therefore be taken *cum grano salis*. In a check-up of one hundred cases in which claim was laid to cure from serious or hopeless maladies by the faith-cure method it was found that over two-thirds of the patients had died in less than two years from the very diseases which had been pronounced incurable. Evidently, the testimonies of the cures were meant to be more honest than the diagnosis correct.²⁵

On the other hand, numerous cures stand to the credit of Mrs. Eddy's cult. Not only have many people been freed of their imaginary ills, (reputable physicians tell us that at least one-third of all the ills people complain about are imaginary) but actual cases of functional disorders, nervous headaches, indigestion, hysteria, and constipation have been cured through the correction of definite mental twists by suggestion, the gospel of good cheer and renewed confidence.

Mrs. Eddy's disciples do not in general outlive other religious or non-religious people. If so, they should be preferred risks in life insurance, which they are not. Someone has wittily said in this connection, "The death-rate of 'Scientists' is like the rest of us—about one apiece." "If Christian Science is divine it cannot fail. The diseases pronounced incurable by medical men must, without exception yield to omnipotence. . . . A system of healing that succeeds less than all the time is certainly not divine."²⁶

When the well-known Dr. S. N. Patten "declared that a community's death-rate is the measure of its Christianity,"²⁷ he stated a truth similar to that which Professor Binder observed in connection with the pilgrimages to and the worship

²⁵ Vd. C. R. Brown, *Faith and Health*, p. 36.

²⁶ Riley, Peabody, Humiston, *Op. cit.*, p. 338.

²⁷ R. F. Cutting, *The Church and Society*, p. 113.

at the shrines. "The shrines," he says²⁸ "are real indictments of the countries where they are located. That the public health service and the hygienic and dietary and moral conditions of the land of Louis Pasteur are so poor that resort to a shrine must be taken for curing disease, is an indictment of that country's neglect of her most precious assets—the health and morals of her people."

✓ Progressive communities do ill to expend their time and their substance entirely in a salvaging process. Nursing or interring the victims of disease is highly essential, of course, but far more divine and praiseworthy is it to exterminate disease bearers and to disperse the miasma which poisons the springs of life. The process of social reeducation, while slow and laborious, is certainly more in keeping with the ideals which were basic in the healing ministry of the Great Physician. The bureau of vital statistics, as Dr. Cutting²⁹ observes is a fairer indication of religious effectiveness and progress than church statistics and all the systems of faith-cure.

Faith-cure is often attributed to cases which have been improperly diagnosed. Obviously then, it is easier to estimate the extent and effectiveness of faith-healing when we know something about the nature of defects and diseases. There are structural abnormalities, organic and mental diseases which have resisted the therapeutic effects of any and all religious faiths. Chiefly in the case of functional disturbances or psychoneurotic states can religious faith or psychotherapeutic procedures offer help, remove conflicts and repressions, and help patients to adjust themselves to the world in which they live. Structural defects are seldom reported as cured by faith, and if such reports are made, the whole matter is always left extremely vague.³⁰

The subsequent effects of faith-cure rarely become common knowledge for obvious reasons. Only a relatively small pro-

²⁸ *Op. cit.*, p. 275.

²⁹ *Op. cit.*, p. 113.

³⁰ Vd. E. S. Conklin, *The Psychology of Religious Adjustment*, pp. 244-257.

portion of deaths which result from the practices of anti-medicine faith-healing groups, and which ordinarily could have been stayed by the attention of competent medical practitioners come to the attention of the public, and these only when a reputable physician refuses to sign a death certificate and the coroner is called in.

So much has the matter of public health become a social problem that legislators are giving much thought to this important question. Hitherto physicians, and the clergy as well, have been reluctant to interfere, lest they be accused of ulterior or selfish motives. The faith curists claim that non-use of medicines is an integral part of their religious systems, but when such systems cause distress and danger to the community, then the law is justified in stepping in, for after all the theory of our government is "based upon the largest degree of individual freedom compatible with the welfare of society." Religious freedom, like personal freedom, must cease when its exercise is destructive of the best things which the law seeks to provide or secure for the citizenship. *Who to judge?*

To create and sustain normal and wholesome relationships is more the function of religion than to make vows to saints and pilgrimages to shrines, or to make an individualistic and self-centered prayer for healing, or to convey information and instruction in matters of theology which centers around faith-healing. Education which is designed with reference to the production of correct social attitudes is more deserving of the blessings of Heaven than all the systems of faith-cures combined. To inculcate the equities of living and working together is more honorable by far than the exercise of a faith which works only in a limited number of cases, chiefly neurotic. The direct result of such faith is usually a matter of doubt, especially so when we remember its innumerable indirect causes which lead to broken homes, shattered friendships, journeys to insane asylums and premature graves.

There are definite dangers for society in faith-healing, for when it becomes merely a formula to relieve pain or to cure illness, there inheres in it that which will disrupt common-

sense and dwarf sound judgment. Belief in medicine is cast to the winds and as a result the dangers of contagious diseases, unsanitary conditions, and precautions for the health of children are minimized, if not altogether disregarded.

Faith-healing frequently becomes an obsession and with major emphasis placed upon it, sight is lost of the fact that we have souls and minds and social relationships as well as bodies. To over-emphasize anti-medicine cures is like repairing the battered front door while the neglected back door admits of every kind of destructive force and element. It is to burn the candle at the wrong end. "To minister to the sick and dying is noble, but sometimes it is like the charge at Balaclava—'magnificent but not war.'"³¹

"Shall we trust the camels to Allah tonight?" asked the servant of Mohammed. "Yes," replied the prophet, "but tie them first." To condemn the benefits of medicine and surgery under the guise of an implicit faith in the sufficiency of Diety is unwarrantable as well as neglectful of the first laws of our own nature—to help and protect one's self. It is a sin against society. Faith is not a substitute for one's own efforts, precautions nor sound judgment. As someone has said, "Allah's care for the camels operates better through a picket rope."

³¹ R. F. Cutting, *Op. cit.*, p. 126.

Chapter Seven

THE CULTS AND THEIR ENVIRONMENT

"Quid velit et possit rerum concordia discors."—Horace

Many and diversified are the conditioning phenomena which determine the rise and progress of civilization. Whether they be physical, psychical, technical, biological or social, they give direction to the prevalent activities of every group and determine the content of the life of society itself.

Strictly speaking, no one ever inherits his politics, his religion, or his ideals, nor such human characteristics as delinquency or longevity, but simply his capacity for them. Not to disparage in the least the numerous other factors which tend to develop such human capacities, we shall here give our attention to environment, as it influences or controls, either group or individual behavior, be that behavior social or anti-social.

The social process may range all the way from the static factor of isolation to co-operative socialization. Somewhere within this span consideration must be given to the dynamic influences of environment. To avoid the risk of rejection or elimination every social group must possess the capacity for adaptation to its environment or milieu. Probably no group is slower to learn the wisdom of such procedure than the religious group. Such groups hold tenaciously to past traditions, narrow conceptions, and archaic methodologies while the world about them moves on. The very genius of genuine Christianity consists in its adaptability. Its truth goes marching on, while divergent groups here and there still bask in the sunshine of a golden past and are blind to the challenge and the opportunity of an even more glorious present. The essentials of religion will endure, but only so if theirs is the possibility of adaptation in a changing world in which a progressive spirit holds forth.

It occurs to the mind on reflection that environmental conditions are pronounced in religious development. Where economic and intellectual conditions prevail on a low plane the tendency is that an equally low form of animistic worship will prevail, abounding in superstition and fetish-worship. A polytheistic belief is possible only in a higher development. As human contacts are broadened through commerce, travel, and study the wisdom of the past is projected into the modern day, and new religious forms, climaxed by monotheistic beliefs, with greater content and more challenging implications, are developed. A narrow environment again, may make such religion dogmatic, while a conciliatory and progressively democratic form will thrive best in an atmosphere where tolerance and humanitarianism are at their height. World views and world movements compel petty or provincial religions to become universal factors of no little importance.¹

A study of Los Angeles as a hot-bed for the wan and lurid cults impresses one forcibly how very much environment can and does influence and affect religious endeavors. Here the cult organizations range in their teachings and practices all the way from the most extreme Holiness type to the most shallow and inane psychology, falsely so-called. Here may be found the Apostolic Church of God, the Azusa Apostolic Faith, a number of Holiness, Nazarene, and Pentecostal churches, Liberal Catholics, the Angelus Temple, a number of Buddhist temples, numerous Christian Science churches, Unity, and approximately fifty groups of Spiritualists. A number of organizations of Theosophists and other Oriental religious nostrums also hold forth here in an effort "to give meaning to point-less lives and to impart a thrill to vacuous existences."

So many people, having accumulated enough of this world's goods in other parts of the country are making Los Angeles their home, where they have come to vegetate in the midst of almost ideal physical surroundings. The salubrious nature of the southern California climate becomes the attraction for

¹ Cf. J. Q. Dealey, *Sociology—Its Development and Applications*, pp. 269-70.

suffering humanity and for people in old age. In the monotonous existence of retired life a religious faith, which is none too challenging nor vigorous ethically, will always have a strong appeal to the idle rich, who make easy prey for the proselyting cultists.

The prolific growth of Christian Science in regions where climate, wealth, and the strain of urban life has telling effects is most arresting. Professor Woodbridge Riley in his "American Thought From Puritanism to Pragmatism" illustrates this in a striking manner by his reference to a map which indicates the "threefold distribution of this sect: the East, the Middle West, and the Far West. By states this means Massachusetts and New York; Illinois and Missouri; Colorado and California. . . . In this threefold distribution the pathological factor is primarily in evidence, for the centers of influence are large cities, with their concomitant nervous disorders, and the health resorts of the mountains and the coast, where it is natural that groups of invalids and semi-invalids should welcome any new therapeutic agency. Christian Science has spread largely along the 40th. latitude—the richest pay streak of our civilization."²

The Christian Science church reports³ a total of 1913 local organizations of which 1504 or 78.6% are found in urban territory and but 409 or 21.4% in rural territory. On the basis of membership an even more striking division is discovered. Of the 202,098 members reported 94% are found in cities with but 6% in rural districts. The same ratio, quite naturally, holds with regard to the Sunday School membership which is found to be 94.7% urban and 5.3% rural. An analysis of the location of the urban churches will reveal that they are found almost invariably in the finest residential sections of the better communities, never in a slum nor in an industrial area.

² Quoted by J. H. Snowden, *The Truth About Christian Science*, p. 260.

³ *United States Census of Religious Bodies*, 1926, Pamphlet No. 60, p. 5.

An interesting observation of the density of Christian Science churches in the proximity of the 40th latitude made by a student⁴ of this cult in 1920 suggests a similar but more contemporaneous study. In an official publication of this church⁵ 74 local organizations are listed for Massachusetts, 124 for New York, 70 for Pennsylvania, 127 for Illinois, 90 for Michigan and 271 for California, which state extends somewhat farther south of this line. New York City with its nearly seven million population has but 32 churches over against the 31 in Los Angeles with scarcely more than a half-million population. As we pass north and south of this line these churches grow fewer in number, Minnesota having but 45, Kentucky 14, Maryland 6, Louisiana 9, and Georgia 14. Christian Science has made little progress in Canada, the whole country having but 65 churches.

A study in this same journal of the practitioners who are licensed by the Mother Church in Boston is equally amazing. The list for California comprises 23 columns of approximately 80 names each, that for Illinois 11½ columns, for New York 13 columns, and for Massachusetts 9 columns. By actual count Boston alone boasts of 236 licensed practitioners, while Los Angeles tops the list with the greatest number in the country, 530.

Some of the most erratic of esoteric cults thrive chiefly where ignorance, illiteracy, and laxity of law enforcement abound. In mountain districts and rural centers where superstition takes root easily the protagonists of voodooism, speaking with tongues, and kindred cults practice their malicious art with questionable success. The greatest numerical strength of certain other cults is found in country districts. The Original Church of God is 61% rural, the Pilgrim Holiness church 62.4%, the Social Brethren 86.5%, the Menno-nites 84.7%, and the Amana Society and Shakers 94.6%.

Those cults which stress the intellectual side of religious belief find their greatest following in urban centers. Besides

⁴ J. H. Snowden, *Op. cit.*, p. 261.

⁵ *Christian Science Journal*, Sept. 1930.

the Christian Science church, already referred to, we find that Bahaism has 95.1% of its following located in urban centers, Theosophy 96.4%, the Christian Science Parent Church 98.6%, while the Vedanta Society and the Society for Ethical Culture report 100% of their followers to be found in the cities. While intellectualism is not of the highest order in Spiritualism, this cult is also stronger in the cities where we find 89.7% of its constituency.

The tangent cults, not unlike the larger historic religious bodies, also have their loyalties and their antipathies, their class inheritances and prejudices quite similar to those that we find in social clans. Modern life in all of its ramifications is not always conducive to their peace, and because of these extraneous and unfriendly influences they are either drawn or driven together for their own defense. To them the identity and integrity of their organism is sacred. The biological primitive clan impulse unites them in either an active or a passive struggle to stave off possible disintegration.⁶

Group solidarity thus created tends to isolate such religious bodies as the Mormons in Utah and Iowa, the House of David in Benton Harbor, the Shakers in their villages, the followers of Dowie in Zion City, the Molokans in a corner of Los Angeles, and the Doukhobors in Western Canada. These latter religionists have turned their backs upon civilization and find the wild and rugged environment in which they have segregated themselves to be conducive to their eccentric religious tenets. But in spite of their group solidarity and mass consciousness, signs are apparent, even to the most casual observer, that disintegration has set in. At least one-third of their number have already left their community, induced to desert their co-religionists because of the influence of their contact with the society which is extraneous to their own group. It is the youth, primarily, who are disrupting the commune because of their dissatisfaction with the existing order.

The Mormons in their isolation have practiced aloofness

⁶ Vd. E. S. Ames, *The Psychology of Religious Experience*, p. 394.

and clannishness. "Where a considerable number of Mormons and Gentiles dwell in the same community, and the Gentile Church looks superciliously across the street upon the Mormon meeting-house, society tends toward two exclusive social divisions, but the feeling of aloofness and superiority is as much on one side as on the other."⁷

Despite its group consciousness and solidarity, Mormonism, highly centralized as it is, is not immune to the incursions which contact with the larger society must inevitably make upon it. "Two things have struck Mormon isolation and exclusiveness staggering blows. America has closed in on the Mormon with an infiltrating intellectual environment of current ideas, opinions, phrases, news, literature, which in the long run affect him more than his Book of Mormon, which he hardly ever reads anymore, or his Desert Evening News and church magazines which he does not read. Utah Gentility has released ponderous industrial and commercial forces that are changing his incentives, habits, and social organization."⁸

The so-called Gift of Tongues, so closely linked with the Gift of Interpretation, was always an important phase of religious demonstration and piety in Mormonism. But the ridicule and disrespect which it has heaped upon the Saints by the ungodly has compelled the church to discourage this spiritual phenomenon, and in consequence its importance as an essential doctrine is on the wane.

The worship of many of the cults is not necessarily localized. The Unity School of Christianity maintains that its system can be practiced anywhere, and separation of the individual from his accustomed religious group is not advised. The same may be said of New Thought. But the natural tendency of kindred minds is to band themselves together; their "consciousness of kind" creates an *esprit de corps* which usually is unique.

⁷ M. E. King, Utah: Apocalypse of the Desert, *The Nation*, June 28, 1922, p. 770.

⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 770.

Quite naturally they seek congenial surroundings where they may worship unmolested, free from peering eyes and ridicule. Since many of the cults are fecund among the lower intellectual and economic classes of society, they can scarcely boast of better meeting-places than in vacant stores, back-rooms of public places, lodge rooms, or private homes. These unassuming places are wholly inadequate for any social service or activity and fail to meet any specific or pressing need of the community. A little higher in the scale are the assembly places of those cults which cater to still another class of society. These are in the pink and green and ballrooms of the leading city hotels, but the social rooms of hotels, everyone well knows, were never designed for religio-social service to the community. More pretentious, on the other hand, are the tabernacles of the Mormons in Utah, Iowa, Hawaii, and Canada; the Christian Science churches in leading wealthy communities, the temples of the Oriental cults in Chicago and California, and those of Aimee McPherson Hutton in Los Angeles and the Dowieites in Zion City. Yet even these are deficient in their appointments and inadequate in modern equipment, so essential for the carrying on of a modern, scientific program that looks to the development of the social side of human nature as well as to its religious.

It is by means of the so-called informal House-Parties, which have so frequently been brought into the limelight by prominent critics, that Buchmanism endeavors to create an environment that shall be congenial to religiously and morally perplexed souls. At these gatherings a fellowship of kindred minds is entered into which makes so profound an appeal to the gregarious nature of men, that stranger and habitual visitor alike, under the almost irresistible spell of environment are easily induced to submit their most intimate problems to the process of "soul surgery." The unfeigned friendship of religious people in such gatherings encourages confessions which are as amazing as they are frank. The setting of the picture is as interesting psychologically as the behavior of the principals itself is arresting.

There may always be found a mutual reaction and inter-

stimulation between both normal and abnormal groups. Contemporaneous movements will always be found to react upon established forms, habits of action, and modes of conduct. The conservatism of old forms conflicts with the over-insistent new; uncertainties and restlessness are but the natural results in this process. Especially is this true in the religious world where the interests for which men strive and their methods of approach are never fully harmonious.

Few have experienced the concomitant effects of conflict and reaction more than the cults. Some of them are endeavoring to avoid open conflict and to fit themselves into their environment, while others, more stubborn and tenacious in their adherence to their ideals find the line of least resistance to lie in the direction of exodus and migration. Rather than be determined by their environment religiously they are prepared to migrate to other regions where a more congenial environment, which they can better understand and manipulate, may be hoped for. A certain *Wanderlust* lays hold on their soul, and rather than stand their ground or defend their position in the face of inimical opposition or unkind criticism, they turn away from accustomed surroundings "in search of some El Dorado or Utopia lying toward the rising or setting sun."

Students of the persecutions and wanderings of the Mennonites cannot but be impressed with the indomitable devotion of this group to the principles of their faith, nor fail to observe how their ardent zeal has always had embarrassment and trial as its fruitage. Unyielding conservatism in religious and educational matters has been largely responsible for their frequent migrations. Though driven from thrifty settlements to bleak, barren, or pristine lands the Mennonites have, nevertheless, always evinced a profound loyalty to their convictions. Both Canadian government officials and United States railroad land agents, with whom they were in communication, directed them to the great open areas of Canada, Kansas, Nebraska, Minnesota, and the Dakotas.⁹

Certain groups of these religionists, upright in their living,

⁹ Vd. A Record Concerning Mennonite Immigration, *American Historical Review*, April 1924, p. 519.

but not over-intelligent, subsequently migrated from community to community, and state to state in order that the school requirements for their children might be evaded. This was true of both the Western Canadian groups and of those living in Ohio and elsewhere.¹⁰

But the real crux of the Mennonite problem has always been their prejudice against military service and the taking of oaths. Wearying of their repeated conflicts with various governments, because of these convictions, they turned their eyes longingly to Paraguay, where they were promised immunity from military service, exemption in oath-taking, and the unhindered control of their own schools. To this country another long trek has been undertaken. Here they hope to preserve from modern influences the faith and observances which were handed down from their fathers and which they so dearly treasure. It is estimated that within a reasonably short time virtually all the 50,000 Canadian Mennonites and most, if not all, of the nearly 175,000 Mennonites in the United States will have migrated to their new home in South America. Several thousands are already at work in the Paraguayan *Hinterland* making preparation for their comrades to follow.¹¹

Other motives have prompted the Mormons in their migrations, who as colonizers scarcely have their equal. Whether they colonized barren mountain districts, large ranches, or sugar plantations in Hawaii, they always revealed their genius as kingdom builders. "The church buys a promising tract of land where it wants a colony and then sells to Mormons only. It is practically impossible for a Gentile to buy out a Mormon in a place where the church desires to retain its hold."¹² Such procedure is the part of wisdom because Mormons soon lose their faith and their fanaticism when away from the home base or out of touch with kindred minds. They "are as a

¹⁰ Vd. Good-bye to the Mennonites, *Literary Digest*, Jan. 22, 1927, p. 46.

¹¹ Vd. The Mennonite Migration, *Ibid*, Sept. 3, 1927, p. 32.

¹² B. Kinney, *Mormonism: The Islam of America*, pp. 81, 82.

rule, gregarious or herd-minded. They go in flocks or herds, with a bishop as herder or herdman. . . . Faithful Mormons still move in colonies of their own. . . . Most of the converts hope, sooner or later, to go to some Mormon community or to get within easy reach of one of the Mormon temples.”¹³

Mormon missionaries in early days met with signal success in Great Britain and Scandinavia, where they persuaded thousands to leave their native shores to settle in Utah. The religious argument as the *modus operandi* in conversion was left in the background while the promise of 160 acres of free land helped materially to persuade the uncertain. Today Scandinavia and Germany are the happy hunting grounds for these missionary zealots, and instead of free land as bait, the promise of certain employment is held out to them. The deluded and the deceived foreigners upon arrival in America meet much the same fate and disappointment that the many English textile workers met whom Dowie had persuaded to come and work in his Zion City lace factories.

In all fairness, however, it must be conceded that economic privileges were not the only incentives held out to Mormon converts. A certain religious obsession also possessed the Saints. Were not they the chosen people of America? Therefore with divine assurance for success, streams of migrants were easily persuaded to follow upon the heels of the early pioneers into the new “Promised Land” of Utah.

Benjamin Purnell, the broom-maker, was another advocate of missionary enterprises, though not to establish a following of the cult of the House of David in foreign lands, but to persuade foreign converts to journey across the seas, from Australia and England to America, there to help populate and develop Benton Harbor, the Mecca of his followers.

But even more migratory than all these religious groups were the Doukhobors. Quite accustomed to persecution in Russia and Siberia they found it a no greater hardship to come to the Canadian Northwest. Here 1600 of this cult,

¹³ W. M. Paden, *The Vitality of Mormonism*, *The Missionary Review of the World*, August 1928, p. 654.

breaking up homes and severing family ties, prepared to follow Peter Verigin over the frozen plains to meet Jesus in the air. The pilgrimage, naturally, failed, and upon the return of the pilgrims trouble, internal strife, and ill-will awaited them.

Migrations born of religious persecution have been common throughout history. Where all such conflict is not glorified as a *Ding an sich*, but as an inspiration to effort which hopes for the achievement of personal or group adjustment to the sum total of environment, it need not be frowned upon. "Progress is to be looked for not in the suppression of conflict, but in bringing it under rational control."¹⁴ Success in adjustment which grows out of conflict is possible only through co-ordination and co-operation.

Environment may be hostile or friendly to the development of the religious life. When it is unsympathetic, the fate of segregated or isolated religious groups as, for instance, the Shakers, is amalgamation with the larger whole. This same fate awaits the Doukhobors, the House of David, the Dowieites, and all kindred cults. Mormonism, on the other hand, while showing distinct evidence of decline in many respects, still retains much life and vitality in its system. But any and all religious systems, regardless of their present flourishing condition face inevitable doom through assimilation with the greater whole unless they make rational adjustment or adaptation to their environment.

¹⁴ C. H. Cooley, *Social Process*, p. 41.

Chapter Eight

THE CULTS AND SOCIAL INSTITUTIONS

"Individualities may form communities, but it is institutions alone that can create a nation."—Disraeli.

In so vastly complex a social order as ours more than instinctive impulses and acquired habits are necessary to control human behavior. The additional directive influence exerted by usage and custom, in spite of the various degrees of social sanction attaching to them, is not sufficient to avert disintegration as groups or individuals face the intricate problems of an enlightened civilization, unless other and more effective elements are introduced. Such are, for instance, the intellect and the emotions, which must augment, indeed, dominate, all regulative processes of society and individuals as conformity to pattern actions and ideals in social evolution is sought.

As group habits and customs receive the support and sanction of thought and feeling they tend to establish a social control which embodies itself in the so-called institutions of society. These as Professor Cooley¹ points out "preserve the results of past experiment and accumulate them about the principal lines of public endeavor, so that intelligence working along these lines may use them."

One should suppose that since human institutions owe so much of their existence to human intelligence they would be in a constant state of change or readjustment as knowledge increases, but this does not seem to be the case. Institutions growing out of group habits and sanctions as well as out of intelligence, usually continue with little or no change so long as they maintain their definite utilitarian aspects.² Their comparative permanence, then, facilitates the supersession of im-

¹ *Social Process*, p. 355.

² Vd. C. A. Ellwood, *The Psychology of Human Society*, p. 319.

pulsive, individual control by an objective social control. In this way institutions, often born of custom and later rationalized, become an integral part of the machinery of society which makes constant adjustment, and hence social integration and solidarity not only feasible, but also possible.

Our social heritage gives us such cultural devices of regulative control as law, government, or a body of social ethics. As social institutions they may not receive universal acclaim, (in fact, no institution ever does) but they do help to establish the mode of conduct and of control for the common good of the largest number. They are not created at will nor to suit convenience, but are an evolutionary product accepted by majorities and submitted to by minorities. While relative permanency inheres in them, they are not altogether immune to reaction, should they become repressive as, for example, slavery or unpopular as, for instance, Prohibition. As strong emotions are aroused and appeal to the intellect is made an adjustment which may even issue in the complete abandonment of the institution itself, may be found to be expedient or even necessary.

Some of the institutions of society, the cultural achievements of human intelligence, arrived at by the trial and error method, have a long history, and unquestionably a future as long as society itself shall continue to exist. It is inconceivable how, for example, modern society could continue without the institution of government, of education, or of the many others which help to systematize the ways of living together.

Intelligent and progressive society is always very much concerned about its institutions. To some of them it attributes a certain sacredness which commands utmost respect, and in some cases almost religious devotion. As an index of civilization they clearly indicate what levels have been reached and what standards are being maintained in social enterprise. They are the very pulse of the social structure in which men strive to achieve and to rise. That is why any effort to decry, to underrate, or to undermine social institutions of undis-

puted worth meets with strenuous opposition. Any attempt whatever, made to rock society's foundations (and society does rest very largely upon its institutions) is looked upon with a feeling of contempt and aversion. All of this is heartening, since society with such attitudes toward and zeal for its proved institutions, evidences its "social valor" and its social perspective.

Religion tends to exert an enormous influence upon habits of action. It thus reinforces, on the one hand, the moral ideals which enter into the life of any institution, and on the other, it militates against such conduct, inspired by a social institution, as does not serve the highest interest of men in society.

What the attitude of religious groups and individuals is toward social institutions or how they relate themselves to them is of great moment to us. It is because many of the modern religious cults are philosophically and temperamentally so decidedly at variance with certain established patterns of social conduct as determined by the institutions of society that they constitute a problematic group in this respect.

Let us observe, then, how the cults relate themselves to some fundamental social institutions.

The Doukhobors having had none too happy experiences at the hands of a despotic Russian Government have not helped matters by continued opposition to every form of state control. The religious conscience of this rather primitive people revolted against what they believed was the popular notion that the State in its sovereignty is unconditioned and absolute. This explains why they steadfastly refused to pay taxes, register vital statistics, and to make proper entry of land deals with the Department of Interior; it reveals the *casus belli* between themselves and the Canadian Government.

Could they have been convinced that, as Professor Giddings says³ "the state itself is not absolute: . . . it is a phenomenon of relativity," and that "sovereignty is not, it never was,

³ *The Responsible State*, pp. 46, 47.

it never can be, an original, unconditioned, universal, and irresistible power to compel obedience," but that as he further points out⁴ the state safeguards life and property and furthers a civilization that ameliorates human misery, humanizes conduct and enlightens the mind, then they would not have come so readily nor so frequently into conflict with one of society's most important and universally accepted institution—government.

The Mormon hierarchy presents another aspect of a singular attitude that religious cults may take over against the state and government. Considering its numbers Mormonism exerts an influence upon American political life which is highly disproportionate. Its struggles with the national government which the problem of polygyny presented is an example *par excellence* of antipathy and resistance to orderly government, of political deceit and treachery.

Hardly had Utah been granted state sovereignty before the Mormon church declared that it proposed to exercise complete control over all political and religious situations within its own territory. As evidence of its purposes, the State legislature, preponderately Mormon, enacted the Evans Bill in 1901 which stipulated that "no persecution for unlawful cohabitation shall be commenced, except on the complaint of the wife or the alleged plural wife of the accused." This bill, while passed, was vetoed.

The Mormon church has dictated policies, thwarted political ambitions of individuals, and humiliated political aspirants. So strong is its political influence in Utah that even in defence of justice or in refutation of corrupt practices, non-Mormon politicians fear to offend that power.⁵ To what evils such a system can lead in contradistinction to progressive government is obvious.

The home, the church, and the school are the foremost educational institutions exercising social control, with formal

⁴ Vd. *Ibid*, Cap. IV.

⁵ Cf. Bruce Kinney, *Mormonism: The Islam of America*, pp. 147-51.

education under the school system steadily increasing in importance. In order to give fullest content to the support and development of the various instruments of the social order, government, religion, and moral ideals must function more and more through formal school education. It is interesting, therefore, to observe what the relation of the various cults is to this all-important social institution.

As already noted, some of the cults, like the Doukhobors, are strenuously opposed to all formal education; others, like certain of the Mennonite groups favor but limited educational advantages. To the credit of most of the cults, however erratic their tendencies and behavior, it must be said that they admit and seek the advantages of education, and even work in the interest of it. To be sure, their education must be chiefly of their own particular brand.

In general education among the Mormons there has been a steady advance. Until forty years ago illiteracy was appalling in Utah, but at that time the non-Mormons or Gentiles, elected one of their own religious persuasion as superintendent of the public schools of Salt Lake City. His efforts resulted in the raising of standards educationally to such a degree that the vacancies caused, when less than half of the Mormon teachers failed to qualify, were filled by teachers from the East. Since that time the Mormons have been converted to the support of the American public and high-school system. Today they have thirteen colleges and academies, the leading one being the Brigham Young University at Provo, Utah, and thirty-four seminaries scattered through six western states, with an academy in Mexico. The Reorganized Church of Latter Day Saints have two colleges, one in Iowa and the other in Missouri. Many of the young men preparing for medicine take their medical-school work in the East.

The Spiritualists have one school in Wisconsin, the Theosophists one in Los Angeles, the Swedenborgians one in Bryn Athyn, Pa., the Mennonites have several colleges in as many states. The Pentecostal and Holiness churches have their own

schools and so also has the Pillar of Fire church, two in New Jersey, one at Bound Brook and the other at Zarephath.

This brief list will suffice to show that the cults do believe in secondary education, even though their schools do not measure up to recognized standards and are largely permeated with their own particular religious views and doctrines.

So universally popular and so inseparably linked up with the life and the affairs of men has the public press come to be that it is difficult for us to conceive of the time when it was non-existent. A nation of one hundred and twenty million souls would be utterly unwieldly without it to create public opinion, to express its heartbeats, and to reflect its attitudes.

Dean Stanley said in a sermon to the printers of London that "once architecture was the press, and told great thought to the world in stone; but now the press is architecture, and is building up the world of ideas and usages."

The cults have been quick to grasp at this highly effective method and means of propaganda for their faiths. The Mormons have six periodicals and daily newspapers, all published in Salt Lake City; the so-called Reorganized branch of this church publishes five periodicals in Independence, Mo. The Spiritualists publish five periodicals, in addition to which there are two hundred magazines and papers of lesser significance devoted to the interests of their teachings.

The following are the principal publications of the Christian Science Publishing Society: The Christian Science Journal; the Christian Science Quarterly, published in seven different languages and also in the Braille; the Christian Science Sentinel; Der Herold des Christian Science; Le Heraut de Christian Science; and the Christian Science Monitor, a high-class international daily newspaper.

The Russellites share with the Christian Scientists the rather unique method of using the secular daily press in publishing authorized discourses, expositions, and lengthy discussions, paying for the space at the usual newspaper rates. In fact, as one goes through the long list of the cults one scarcely finds any of importance which does not publish its own offi-

cial organs and sectarian periodicals with more or less wide circulations.

The Free Press and its handmaid, Free Speech, are social institutions fraught with enormous regulative power of control. When Milton, having marital difficulties with his seventeen year old wife "was accused of being the leading spirit in a new sect, the Divorcers, he wrote his noble Areopagitica to prove his right to say what he thought fit and incidentally to establish the advantage of a free press in the promotion of Truth."⁶ The spirit of this, one of the first and most famous literary polemics in defense of the free press and of free speech, has been duplicated in recent months by an equally passionate controversy in defense of the same institutions.

A biography of Mary Baker Eddy, published in 1929 by a leading New York publishing house aroused the ire of the Christian Science church to such an extent that boycott action of the most unscrupulous sort has been taken by that church against the publishers and many bookdealers. Letters of intimidation have been sent to a great many business houses which handled this book or displayed it on their shelves. As a result booksellers in different parts of the country have been forced to take all copies off their tables, while others who generally have it but who lack the courage to display it, keep it hidden away under the counter.

Not only bookdealers but public libraries have been interfered with. Someone has said that the Christian Science church with but 202,000 adherents has attempted a control of the press and free speech that almost twenty million Catholics would not think of attempting. Booksellers over the country are registering complaints against this church's methods of censorship and of muzzling the press. The attitude as expressed by the publishers of the book in a form letter mailed to the book-trade is significant: "It seems to us that it would be extremely dangerous to the interests of intellectual freedom if publishers should refrain from publishing or booksellers from bringing forward such books as this either

⁶ J. H. Robinson, *The Mind in the Making*, pp. 45, 46.

because they fear the hostility of a particular sect or because they wish to show deference to the nobility or sincerity of its beliefs. If they did so refrain it would mean that no great leader of an organized body could be coolly, fearlessly and impartially set before the public in a biography."

When regulative social forces are being considered, then marriage as an institution and because of its relationship to the home and family assumes primary importance.

Mormonism is the only American cult whose doctrines specifically countenanced and encouraged polygynous marriage. Since 1896, however, when the State of Utah enacted a law making plural marriage prohibitory, there has been no open practice of this form of marriage. Sporadic cases have been noted, but its common practice has subsided with its doctrinal sanction held in abeyance.

These Latter Day Saints advocate a doctrine which supports two kinds of marriage—for time and for eternity. Marriage "for time" is dissoluble by death and is entered into mainly in the interest of the propagation of children. By this arrangement a woman may be married or "sealed" to one man for this life and for eternity. A marriage contracted for eternity transcends the limits of time and permits of souls being produced in the world to come. Such a doctrine leads to the utter degradation of woman. Whatever honor accrues to her, both now and in the hereafter, is bestowed upon her by her husband. Equality of sex is an impossible dream under this system and makes divorce a very common practice.

The opposite extreme in the theory of marriage is found among such ascetic cults as the Shakers and the House of David. These cultists loathe sex and frown upon marriage because of the supposedly sinful nature of sexual relations. Under such concepts of marriage a primary group like the family would soon be but a matter of history. The anti-social attitude which a doctrine of this kind lays bare is quite apparent.

Mary Baker Eddy, like Mrs. Besant, Aimee McPherson Hutton, Madame Blavatsky, and Mother Ann Lee chafed

under the restraints of married life. She regarded marriage only as a spiritual union, notwithstanding the fact that she divorced one husband and buried two others. She says of marriage that it is often convenient, sometimes pleasant, and occasionally a love affair, in view of which it is presumed,⁷ that having married three times she tried marriage conveniently, pleasantly and lovingly.

Mrs. Eddy says further that "until it is learned that God is the Father of all, marriage will continue."⁸ The inference here is made apparent when she further suggests elsewhere "that generation rests on no sexual basis."⁹

Her belief that the institution of marriage cannot be permanent nor abiding she reveals in her contention that "the claims of the marriage covenant may be relinquished by mutual consent," and that "the abolition of marriage is possible in science."¹⁰ It is singular that while "Christian Science teaches that to be a wife and not a mother is woman's highest privilege,"¹¹ she herself should choose the lesser station, that of motherhood, and especially so, since "Science" indicates that celibacy is nearer right than marriage.¹²

In the early days of Spiritualism it was not an uncommon thing to find social outcasts joining this cult and founding free love colonies. The colony at Kiatone Springs, N. Y. is well known. That of the Harmonial Society founded in the State of Kansas by a married couple named Spencer flourished for a time because land and love were free. This colony of some fifty or more souls soon fell prey, however, to mutiny and uprising which resulted in the routing of the leaders and in the dooming of the enterprise so openly and defiantly hostile to the institution of marriage.

Victoria Woodhull, whose advocacies of free love became too indecent to be endured by state authorities, became pres-

⁷ J. V. Coombs, *Religious Delusions*, p. 172.

⁸ *Science and Health*, p. 64.

⁹ Quoted by J. V. Coombs, *Op. cit.*, p. 172.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 172.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, p. 173.

¹² *Ibid.*, p. 172.

ident of the National Spiritual Association. An editor of one of the Spiritualist papers advocated the abrogation of the marriage relation and free promiscuous relation of the sexes."¹³

While the rank and file of Spiritualists may not be advocates of free love, nevertheless, a large and constantly growing class of professional mediums is known to have strong proclivities that way. They are found in almost every community. It is a matter of common knowledge among certain groups of men and women who are unhappy in their marriage relations, that sympathy is not sought for in vain by consulting the average medium, and moreover, that illicit love may find its justification by invoking the spirits of the dead through such mediums.

Social scientists are little concerned about the specific systems of theology and metaphysics except as such teachings make socialization in life situations more difficult. In such event, of course, protest is forthcoming and justified. Religion penetrates where law cannot go and convinces with a certainty that public opinion cannot boast of. Functioning through social institutions it can and it may clarify social relationships and make proper adjustment possible. To corrupt, break down, or nullify human institutions, however imperfect, without substituting better ones in their stead is to facilitate maladjustment—and that is definitely in contradistinction to the spirit of true religion, and to a socially sensitized spirit.

¹³ Vd. *Ibid*, p. 131.

Chapter Nine

THE CULTS AND SEXUALITY

"Diseased Nature oftentimes breaks forth
In strange eruptions."

—Shakespeare.

Even a most casual observation will lead the student of the psychology of religion to appreciate the psychic co-relation that exists between religion and sex. Scholars of renown still make battle over the question whether the sex instinct is stimulated by religion or religion is largely influenced by the sex instinct. But they err exceedingly, who, on the basis of what is often a biased or superficial observation of the mutual relationship of religion and sex, contend that religion is deeply rooted in or is solely a product of the sex instinct, since it is a matter of common knowledge that the religious consciousness ante-dates all sexual interests and continues long after they have subsided.

Religion touches life at innumerable points where the sex urge is a non-entity. To associate, therefore, religion with the sex emotions exclusively is to disregard entirely those deeper experiences of life which are born of tribulation or triumph, adversity or ecstasy, the hideousness of sin, or the beauty of holy things. Relationship does not necessarily establish origins.

Pagan religions always laid great stress upon sex-rites. "Sex became one of the earliest divinities, and there is abundant evidence that its organs of processes generally were invested with a religious sense of awe and sanctity."¹ Almost instinctively, our judgment of these rites in the light of their intrinsic worth as a part of ancient religious exercises, is colored by the sex taboos which modern, and largely Christian society has created. As Edward Carpenter suggests² the

¹ Edward Carpenter, *Pagan and Christian Creeds*, p. 247.

² *Ibid.*, p. 184.

"sexual relationships are so deep and intimate a part of human nature that from the first it has been simply impossible to keep them out of religion—it being, of course, the object of religion to bring the whole being into some intelligible relation with the physical, moral, and if you like supernatural order of the great world around him. Sex was felt from the first to be part, and a foundation part, of the great order of the world and of human nature; and therefore to separate it from Religion was unthinkable and a kind of contradiction in terms."

But there is no light without its shadows. Religious sanction in sex matters inspired laxity; and the next steps, perversion, license, and degradation were a natural consequence. Extremes beget extremes. As a result of the reaction against such excess the sex taboo was thrust upon the civilized world. Church history is replete with specific instances where a revolting conscience, seeking to wrest itself free from excessive sex indulgences, adopted extreme and unbalanced exaggerations. The spell of sex taboos with their prudishness and false modesty has not yet been broken, nor does it appear that it will for a long time to come.

The pagans had no monopoly on sexual extravagances as they submitted themselves to their religious exercises. In Apostolic days the *agape* degenerated and led to numerous unwholesome practices. For this reason it was denounced by the Fathers and condemned by the Councils of the Church. Scandalous dissipation and flagrant breaches of chastity in connection with religious festivals required radical measures. Centuries later, celibacy and continence were enjoined as a measure to eradicate similar opprobrious practices and vicious indulgences, but sexuality persisted, notwithstanding.³

Neither did asceticism in all of its austerity have any appreciable success as a therapeutic measure in stemming the sex debacle. Natural instincts cannot be uprooted by unnatural devices. Religion must use other weapons.

³ Cf. G. B. Cutten, *The Psychological Phenomena of Christianity*, p. 421.

It is patent how the Church, then, struggling with this problem, exposed itself to the frequent criticism of taking a negative or repressive attitude toward sex. Religion could not take a more constructive attitude toward the whole question so long as the opinion prevailed that an ascetic attitude was the only effective method of control.

Despite the fact that the sex impulse is God-given and a burning reality in the human breast, it has always remained a problem to cope with. In the restraint or control of these passions which are surcharged with latent possibilities for both the good and evil of society, religion has no equal. One of the chief evidences of its puissance has always been its effectiveness in a sane control of an instinct which, if it were not bridled and subjected to definite checks, is sufficiently potent to undermine the whole of the human race.

Yet on the other hand, religion not only restrained the sex impulse, but it also gave it sanction and placed upon it the stamp of divine approval. In early religions sex was deified. Ancient religions abounded in sex symbolism, an evidence of how worship was directed to the organs and powers of procreation. It is a mistake to condemn Phallicism off hand as sacrilegious because the modern Occidental mind cannot understand the Oriental mind for which the phallic symbols always possessed reverential religious content. The modern religious world has outgrown these concepts, it is true, has stepped to a higher plane, but not a few modern religious people, scoffing at phallic symbols, have proceeded, nevertheless, to glorify and even to worship sex and render obeisance to it. The forms change but the problem remains.

Illustrative of how sex may consort with religion is the erotical hymnology the use of which strained revivalism and intense religious emotionalism have always accentuated. It is not possible to dissociate sentiment and emotion from religion, and yet, when it buds forth in a garden of supposedly religious poetry, set to the tune of jazzy music, its suggestibility arouses suspicions well founded, and renders questionable any contribution that it may make to well-balanced character.

Erotic sensualism is nothing short of being an attempt to use love as a religious substitute, and as such presents a socio-religious phenomenon which becomes problematical just so soon as it prostitutes lofty emotions in the name of sacred song. "In the middle ages there have been instances of nuns who have gone to reprehensible extremes in their rhapsodizing over Jesus, leaving the strong suspicion that their ecstasy was more than a little tinged with eroticism. We have ample testimony that under certain high emotional tensions, the masculine in Jesus rather than the asexual archetypal character is what makes the appeal to adolescent, high-strung girls. It is hardly strange that in the cold dawn of reaction, the virile, unromantic ethical note makes slight impression."⁴

A singular manifestation of the religious mien that it is possible to give to the expression of the sex impulse may be found in mysticism, where sex-love represents the intimacy of the soul with the divine. To interpret the experiences of the mystics as of a sexual nature because of the resort to the use of the love language may be controversial, but at least the observation is arresting. "The enforced celibacy and virginity of monks and nuns," says Cutten⁵ "led them, consciously or unconsciously, to transfer their affection to God, Jesus, or the Virgin Mary, and the sensual impulse, unable to express itself naturally, found an outlet thereby." This author then cites⁶ such female mystics as Mme. Guyon, Soeur Jeanne des Anges, St. Catherine of Sienna, Juliana of Norwich, Marie de l' Incarnation, St. Teresa and St. Gertrude, who expressed sensual pleasure in communion with God. This list we might augment with such severe Puritans as Ralph Erskine in Scotland and John Cotton in New England, illustrative of the adaptability of the images and language of sex love to the fervor of religious devotion. Albeit "these souls were as pure as the lilies of France and Italy or the snows of the north."

But when a type of religious emotion which is more physi-

⁴ S. Bissel, Erotic Hymnody, *The Christian Century*, Oct. 2, 1929. p. 1216.

⁵ *Op. cit.*, p. 436.

⁶ *Vd. Ibid.*, pp. 436-439.

cal than religious merges with the sex impulse a decided danger inheres. Such an emotion leads invariably to an abandonment to passion and religious perversion as was witnessed by the excesses of the zealots of such cults as the Perfectionists, the Adamites, the Brethren of the Free Spirit, Bible Communists, Free Lovers, and the Oneida Community. Little wonder that the Church has inclined toward the sex taboo and looked upon sex relationships with suspicion and dread.

"Religious devoutness shows itself by sexual abnormality in two extremes, excess and continence."⁷ Such abnormality, though somewhat transient, followed in the wake of the fervent Kentucky revivals of 1800, but infinitely more tragic were the sexual irregularities which the more widespread and intensely emotional revivalism of 1832 left behind. So continually were certain territories of New York State swept by veritable revival conflagration that they came to be known as the "burnt district." In this region "spiritual marriages" flourished which resulted in broken homes, deserted children and illegitimacy. A student of the subject⁸ observes that "every intense and widespread religious revival has produced increased sexual irregularity. Every organized effort toward ostentatious sexuality has found its justification in religion. . . . Every concerted effort at the establishment of compulsory sexual excess, either of repression or indulgence, has found its warrant in religion and its beginning amid religious excitement. Every known type of sexual perversion . . . has been credited with the endorsement of some god, and practiced and sanctified by some religious society."

Similarly, Cutten⁹ holds that "those who are carried away by the excitement of religious revivals usually justify their licentiousness by the claim that they are perfect and therefore cannot sin, regardless of their conduct; as the followers of Amalric many years ago claimed that 'he who lives in love

⁷ *Ibid*, p. 432.

⁸ T. Schroeder, Religion and Sensualism as Connected by Clergymen, *American Journal of Religious Psychology and Education*, Vol. 3, p. 27.

⁹ *Op. cit.*, p. 435.

can do no wrong.' Any persons or sects which present such a doctrine are usually suspected and probably justly, of the licentious conduct which results from such teaching. . . . This license cannot be morally justified and the excuse is never acceptable to those outside the esoteric circle, however much the elect may try to make themselves believe it."

Three reasons are given in defense of "spiritual marriage," first, that having become perfect it becomes impossible to fall into sin; the second is the doctrine of affinities; and the third is the biblical proof in I Corinthians 9:5 where the woman referred to is interpreted as being the "spiritual wife" of St. Paul. This pernicious doctrine of "spiritual wifehood" produced polygyny in Salt Lake City, celibate love at Mount Lebanon, complex marriage at Wallingford and Oneida Creek, and affinities among the Spiritualists. The various Free Love colonies thrived exuberantly in such doctrinal atmosphere.

The South European idea that woman is *per se* an evil seemed to justify continence as a sexual extreme. The monks could think none too harshly of the "feminine part of human nature." "Women were represented as the door of hell, and as the mothers of all human ills; all sorts of insults were heaped upon them, and the complete inferiority of the sex was continually maintained by law. The sudden upheaval of passion experienced by monks at the sight or touch of women and due, of course, to the unnatural inhibitions which they endeavored to force upon themselves, was charged to the demoniacal nature of women."¹⁰

Possibly nowhere is sexuality so prominently displayed under the guise of religion as in the cults. Under their sheltering wings unrestrained sexual proclivities find apt expression without fear of condemnation, except it be from extraneous sources,—and this does not distress unduly the votaries of the cults since they feel themselves justified because their digressions are graced with a thin veneer of religiosity.

Christian Science and Shakerism, doctrinally, attribute sex to God. Mrs. Eddy, exalting the feminine factor in her con-

¹⁰ G. B. Cutten, *Op. cit.*, p. 447.

cept of the "Mother God," took the Lord's Prayer and sought not only to improve the Model Prayer, but to add spiritual content to it by changing it to read, "Our Father-Mother God, all-harmonious, Adorable One."¹¹ Ann Lee also proclaimed the motherhood of God. According to Shaker theology Christ became the second Adam and Ann Lee the second Eve, "thus restoring the race, both male and female, to perfect purity. . . . She was the one in whom dwelt the Divine Mother. . . . It was therefore necessary that there be two saviors, one to restore man, another to redeem woman from her sin. In Ann the redemption of mankind was complete."¹²

The characteristic feature of Shakerism was always, and still continues to be the annihilation of sex, for of nothing were the Shakers more certain than that "the chief sin, the cause of the world's woe, the cause of woman's debasement, is sexual intercourse."¹³ Married couples seeking admission to their fellowship found it necessary to renounce their conjugal relationship and to live as brother and sister in separate buildings for men and women. The founder's word was "You must forsake the marriage of the flesh or you cannot be married to the Lamb."¹⁴

A sex neurosis may be said to be the commentary to some of the most stormy and distressing scenes in Mrs. Eddy's career. Repressing the natural sex urges, which she had failed to sublimate, she set up conflicts in her inner self that sometimes caused her to become her own worst enemy. Her rebellion against promiscuous sex desires became common knowledge. "So persistently in later years did she deny the legitimacy of the demands of sex that many of her followers came to believe that even cohabitation between husband and wife was unspiritual, if not ungodly."¹⁵

Mrs. Eddy's rational, but untrained, illogical mind, in the endeavor to think its problems through to consistent conclu-

¹¹ M. B. Eddy, *Science and Health*, p. 16.

¹² C. W. Ferguson, *The Confusion of Tongues*, p. 324.

¹³ *Ibid.*, p. 334.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 328.

¹⁵ E. F. Dakin, *Mrs. Eddy*, p. 18.

sions, would often bring her to that point where she felt herself compelled to take positions and assume attitudes which unconsciously disturbed her sex complex, presenting her as a theologian and teacher none too challenging for those at home in philosophical thought and the systems of divinity. "To a certain type of mind," says Gilbert Seldes¹⁶ "the idea of difference and of opposition is displeasing. There must be only harmony and oneness. Not procreative intercourse of male and female, nor the equilibrium between positive and negative, nor the duality of right and wrong and good and evil, but the destruction of these oppositions in the creation of the One. Mrs. Eddy applied this principle to sex. She did not forbid, but she discouraged marriage. She said that 'Jesus was the offspring of Mary's subconscious communion with God.'"

In an avowed attempt to recover Apostolic Christianity and to make the religion of Jesus effective in the redemption of men from failure, sin, morbidity, and defeat in the moral life, Buchmanism comes upon the scene stressing the idea that the road to this goal lies in a re-emphasis upon the horror of sin, the facing of the sex problem, the use of the confession, conversion, and the subsequent possession of a spiritual dynamic for personal leadership. Accordingly, this cult (or movement as Buchman's followers choose to call themselves) has exposed itself to no end of sharp censure because of its conspicuous resounding emphasis upon sex and the need for an effectual panacea. Its emotionalism is strained to an unsavory degree due largely to the over-playing of the sex issue. Contrary to repeated denial, authenticated evidence is extant which indicates that in the religious house-parties, which Ferguson¹⁷ calls the "holy of holies of the cult of Buchmanism," "converts of both sexes proclaim their secret vices publicly—a practice referred to by the initiate as 'washing out.'"¹⁸ To

¹⁶ *The Stammering Century*, p. 386.

¹⁷ *Op. cit.*, p. 95.

¹⁸ T. S. Matthews, Good News For Sinners, *The New Republic*, Dec. 8, 1926, p. 71.

indulge in generalities is hazardous, and yet it is just this sex-emphasis that has resulted in a "flock of wild rumors," and the well informed "profess to believe that the parties are orgies of sex stories or prolonged cases of hysteria, and that the total influence of the movement is pernicious."¹⁹

The founder of the House of David who proclaimed himself the Seventh Messenger believed his God-given mission to consist in the declaration of the assembling of the 144,000 males and of an equal number of females, who in the spirit of Pastor Russell's classic avowal are destined never to die. But only until this shall have been accomplished were Benjamin Purnell's rigid doctrines against sexual intercourse, even between married couples, to obtain. The absolutely ascetic nature of the colony members may be appreciated when we remember that only two children have been born in the colony. The sinfulness of sex as taught in the House of David precluded any thought of marriage, and lest youth should fall upon error in this respect they were always kept under strict surveillance. Yet no more infamous stain upon the name of religion is recorded anywhere than in the 15,000 pages of sworn testimony gathered by the State of Michigan in its three months' trial of Benjamin Purnell, the pious and voluptuous fraud, who was convicted of ravaging a score or more of unsuspecting and credulous girls of his religious colony. It was plainly a case of sexual continence for the votaries of the cult, but of excess and license for its leader. "The king can do no wrong."

Past Mormonism was another synonym for sensual gratification, but the menace of Mormonism is abated. Polygyny has come to an end, although theoretically the doctrine stands as a divinely inspired revelation. The history of Mormonism is a record of sensuality, especially reprehensible since sexual irregularities and carnal indulgences were not only condoned but sanctioned by religion.

If Shakerism is practically, and Christian Science theoretic-

¹⁹ K. I. Brown, A Religious House-Party, *The Outlook*, Jan. 7, 1925, p. 27.

cally, opposed to the sex impulse, the other extreme was indulged in by the followers of Joseph Smith, Jr. and Brigham Young. "Sensuality has ever been one of the most subtle temptations and greatest dangers of religion and has often degraded its light into darkness."²⁰ It has been only as the result of the active indignation of the Christian World and of the patriotic American that this licentious practice, which was a degenerate throwback to early and pagan religions, was hurled into the limbo of forbidden things.

The discussion of sex sublimation and of spiritualizing the sex force is current in Yogoda religious philosophy. But the Swamis are amateurs in this art when compared with Aimee McPherson Hutton, who knows how in an extraordinary way to exploit her own animal magnetism and the sex appeal in her Angelus Temple services by "casting the glow of religious imagination over sensuality without changing its essential nature."²¹

It may be contended that this emphasis upon sex in religious cults, whether it be that of continence or of sanction, is anomalous. However, the mere fact that it is so conspicuous in many of these esoteric religious groups makes it the subject of attention and examination. The maladjustment to which it inevitably and invariably leads makes it an important social problem—chaff that must be winnowed from the wheat.

The esoteric and unsocial nature of the cults may explain in part these questionable and sordid digressions from the beaten path of religious procedures and the infractions of good taste and decency, but it does not absolve them of the pernicious consequences. Cult religion may cater to or exploit sexual perversions, or even inhibit the functioning of natural and God-given impulses, but a genuinely social religion will ever frown upon and militate against the pandering to the vicious and bestial in human nature or the restraining of natural functions.

²⁰ J. H. Snowden, *The Truth About Mormonism*, p. 31.

²¹ R. Niebuhr, *Leaves From the Notebook of a Tamed Cynic*, p. 83.

Ascetic, unnatural repression, like pagan promiscuity of sexual gratification, gnaws at the very vitals of society, brutalizes character and conduct, is an offense to the social conscience and an insult to human intelligence, even though it goes on parade under the banner of religion.

Complete adjustment in sex matters is still remote, for the conditioning influence of the sex taboo has not yet been shaken off. It is an encouraging sign, however, that the Church is becoming conscious of an explicit opportunity in this field, as its hitherto *laissez faire* policies with reference to sex problems is being challenged by critical observers.

Through its widening social vision the Church is beginning to realize that in this unconquered field excellent and adequate spadework can be done in the building of the Kingdom of God, and in helping society emerge from sexual maladjustment and its concomitant maze of confusion into a sane and sacred realization of the sanctity of sex relationships and their inherent possibilities for the true enjoyment of life.

PART THREE

RELIGIOUS CULTS AND TELIC PROGRESS

Chapter Ten

THE CULTS AND UTOPIAN THOUGHT

"Not in Utopia,—subterranean fields,—
Or some secreted island, Heaven knows where,
But in the very world, which is the world
Of all of us."—Wordsworth.

Dreamers have always been visionaries. Spending much of their time in the clouds, they do make an occasional excursion to earth, and earth is none the poorer for them nor for their idealism, impracticable as it generally is. Said Auguste Comte, "There is no Utopia so wild as not to offer some incontestable advantages,"¹ and Professor Hertzler adds, "Everywhere we see utopianism become reality. The Utopians and their utopianism have a great role in shaping the social evolution which came after them."² The mere fact that men think and suggest solutions in terms of telic social progress already indicates a salutary trend, even though they may be pure Utopians.

Jesus was the greatest of all Utopians, greatest because of this distinguishing characteristic which set him apart from all ancient and modern visionaries,—an unlimited perspective. His social ideal is practicable though rigid and exacting. Plato, More, Bacon, Campanella, Harrington, and the rest, with limited vision, made the unfortunate mistake, among others, of over-emphasizing the correction of environment, the creation of laws, and the stimulus of the "emotion of the ideal," and of minimizing the grim reality of life, as is, human frailty and weakness, and failed to realize that man, as a volitional and rational being often acts contrary to will and reason. St. Paul speaks for men in general when he says, "What I would, that do I not." (Romans 7:15)

The social ideal of Jesus is that of a commonwealth of God,

¹ Quoted by J. O. Hertzler, *History of Utopian Thought*, p. 279.

² *Ibid.*, p. 279.

a kingdom of heaven upon earth. He, while looking to the end and accomplishment of his ideal, never for a moment, lost sight of the haunting specter, sin, which alone could impede, if not wreck, his entire program. "Those who frame ideals of society, and trust that, in the conditions they devise, every one would be wise and good, are content to shut their eyes to the existence of sin, which suffices to spoil any earthly paradise."³ Jesus was intensely in earnest and never allowed himself to write a descriptive book nor to chart his kingdom, but set at once to the task of founding his ideal state, unfolding its nature and its scope, becoming its first citizen and its first martyr.

Jesus' kingdom was primarily a subjective state of the individual but with implications as broad as society itself. The laws of the kingdom were to find their adequate expression in every sphere of human endeavor. Individual perfection must result in the perfection of society. His kingdom ideals were spiritual realities which were to be woven into the warp and woof of the associated life of men. His was not a genetic scheme but a purposeful program, destined to evolve through telic process until the ideal was fully come in all the earth.

The pioneers of a social interpretation of religion never conceived social reconstruction as consisting in setting certain societal groups apart, aloof from the world of affairs, in the hope that thus they might eventually and with proud satisfaction be able to point to the completion, in limited areas, to be sure, of the program of Jesus. In fact, the Church never thought of salvation from the ills of society as being limited to a definite or particular group only, or to the extent of complete segregation and isolation from or abandonment of the world, except it be the seclusion which convent and monastery walls provide. For here, it is held by some, one may attain to a degree of moral and spiritual perfection. However, not flight from but conflict with those very ills of society which impel certain individuals to seek such shelter and security fur-

³ W. Cunningham, *Christianity and Social Questions*, p. 175.

nishes social religion its *casus belli*, and only physical restrictions, never practicable ideals nor telic purpose, curtail its potency and impede its effective progress.

It has been the pet diversion of some of the religious sects to assimilate certain ideas of the literary Utopians, and to attempt to establish ideal communities in which their own theories might be tried out, with, of course, the usual result that has attended all such utopian colonization schemes—failure. The cults, in so far as they sought to establish ideal communities, failed to conceive of the genius of Jesus as not being primarily program-making but attitude-building. In the field of attitudes, not in utopian programs, is where the social significance of the teachings of Jesus is to be studied. Here the cults have failed. They seek primarily a friendly universe, but in this pursuit they can hope for little from their formulas, their cures, or their utopian colonies and radical idealism.

Mormon missionaries still point to Utah as the Promised Land with Salt Lake City as its New Jerusalem. When in early days the Latter Day Saints migrated to this primitive *Hinterland*, hundreds of miles distant from the frontiers of civilization, they hoped to announce, as they did in 1852, their doctrine of polygyny, without molestation or objection from the Government or from unsympathetic citizens. This pernicious doctrine, a remnant of the communism of women advocated by Plato, was one of the means, among others, held out to the Gentiles, by which happiness might be attained.

But in spite of the abolition of this anti-social doctrine, Mormonism still has its utopian appeal, especially enticing to the uneducated and to the foreigners in our city slums. To this latter class in particular, the urge becomes unusually strong to venture forth to the "communistic paradise" which the Latter Day Saints have created in Utah. Prosperity is certain, they are told, if they but move thence and accept the teachings of the church.

Joseph Smith, Jr. was convinced, as he went in and out of the churches—a veritable rolling stone gathering no moss—

that every church was dead wrong. So he decided to organize the perfect church. In the conflict that later ensued between the Mormons and the government, he and his co-religionists also came to the belief that the only true State which can exist is that which they were creating and in which they were permitted to hold the balance of power. Hence the union of Church and State as a Mormon ideal. The one exists for the other. The golden apples in politics are distributed to the ecclesiastical faithful. In Bear Lake county, Idaho, a few years ago, every political office, save two, was filled by Mormons, although the proportion of their number in the population never warranted such a condition.

Walls of stone are not necessary to isolate Mormon communities. Mightier than these are ostracism or favoritism, either of which practically assures the faithful a full measure of happiness, prosperity and success. And that is all that some earth-bound creatures could hope and wish for.

Salt Lake City is a veritable Utopia for the Mormons, but there are others. Not long ago Dr. Frederick M. Smith of Independence, Mo. announced that his Re-organized Mormon church had purchased a tract of land of some 11,000 acres south of Springfield, Mo. and that it was the avowed purpose of his group there to establish a "modern Utopia" for members of his church. The chief industry will consist in the raising of turkeys and sheep. The community is to be "unusually idealistic." Every settler will turn over to the church all that he produces in excess of his own and his family's needs. No taxes are to be levied.

Another idealistic enterprise is that of Unity City, near Lees Summit, Mo., eighteen miles southeast of Kansas City. Here the efficacy of Unity teaching in a beatific community will be practiced. According to a prospectus issued by the Trustees of the Unity School of Christianity, the paramount ideal of Unity City will be the setting up of the Kingdom of Heaven, the ideal of peace, harmony, prosperity and health. Here the fulfillment of the vision of John in Revelations twenty-one, they hope, will be realized. In this Utopia the

Kingdom of God will be brought to earth.

The Doukhobors, wearying of persecution in Russia, set their faces toward the West and hoped to find in Canada a Promised Land where they could pursue their primitive mode of life, free from the exactions of modern society. Peter Verigin moved six thousand of his followers to a \$650,000 tract in British Columbia. Here money has no moral nor purchasing power. The various communities are all self-supporting, food and clothing being provided from a common store. Here all living creatures, bird, beast, and fish, are regarded as brethren. These religious extremists "have always been opposed to school education. They say that Christ was never a scholar and that he did not recommend schools. They believe that education disintegrates men into endless grades and divisions; it does not help to establish the brotherhood of man."⁴ Idleness never occurs among them, nor crime, and punishment is not necessary. They make no attempt to impose their views or doctrines of communal living upon others. Theirs is the doctrine of live and let live. With their limited vision they do appear to be happy in the thought that here Utopia is about as near reality as is possible anywhere.

Benton Harbor, Mich., stronghold of the House of David, an ascetic colony, and Zion City, Ill., headquarters and "heaven upon earth" for the Dowieites, are but two other attempts to prove the practicability of plans for happiness and religious idealism in concrete form. Zion City with its 6,250 inhabitants, located midway between Chicago and Milwaukee, is the realization of John Alexander Dowie's dream and is now presided over and largely owned by his successor, Wilbur Glenn Voliva. "The general aim is to build a city free from the vices that now curse the earth. Land is not sold, but leased for a period of eleven hundred years, and in the lease are numerous restrictions for safeguarding the spiritual, mental, and physical welfare of the inhabitants."⁵

"Rarely does a utopian in his writings lay much stress on

⁴ E. Jessup, *A Utopia That Works, Travel*, Nov. 1922, p. 38.

⁵ *Leaves of Healing*, Nov. 28, 1925, p. 216.

... religion . . . or on the necessity of formal moral teaching as the determining factors in social life.”⁶ But in contradistinction to such the Utopians of the cults make religion the principal factor, the chief force for telic control. They have evolved a distinct ascetical theology in the hope of attaining holiness and perfection in the midst of carnal things.

The Shakers, in what few communities they are still to be found, live in communistic celibacy and separation from the world. The annihilation of sex continues to be the outstanding feature of the cult. Sexual intercourse, they hold, is the chief sin of the world, the cause of the most of the world’s woe. Practicing celibacy, of course, does not permit them to make any contribution to a perfection of the human race, physically. Their contribution is spiritual. The establishment of their church marks the dawn of the day of judgment or the beginning of God’s kingdom upon earth. What could be more utopian?

Plato, More, Campanella and Bacon advocated racial betterment through what we have come to call eugenics, and what Irving Fisher calls the “science of hygiene for future generations.” The eugenics of these utopians, largely physical, has in the light of modern knowledge been complicated by the laws of heredity and cultural accumulation, which laws are equally, if not more important than those merely governing perfect physical birth.

John Alexander Dowie believed in and defended miscegenation. Through inter-marriage of all races he believed it to be possible to produce Adam or the race lost through the confusion of Babel.

Annie Besant of the Theosophists arrived not long ago in California at eighty-two years of age with a scheme that would seem to require the physical strength and optimism of youth. She would establish a new community for bigger, better, more superior Americans, and she would start with supervised mating of young people. According to the philosophy

⁶ J. Q. Dealey, *Sociology—Its Development and Applications*, p. 367.

of Theosophy, marriage has duty and not passion as its chief motive, the sex passion having a purely reproductive function.

With all their ephemeral ideas and impracticable schemes the Utopians did make certain contributions to human betterment. They are in theory much like society itself which "anticipates evolution, sets standards above the actual and makes predicates that men act on but cannot verify."⁷ So Professor Hertzler rightly contends that "social perfection is an illusive ideal, always receding as we advance. Humanity's perfection will never be attained; it is only possible to work toward it. Utopia is forever becoming."⁸

But the cults are not, while utopian in some respects, interested primarily in social progress. Their interest for happiness, health, or success is centered chiefly upon their own group or upon those who have accepted their doctrines. They understand only vaguely the possibilities of directing society and presenting measures that will assist men of coming generations in avoiding disaster. It has been pointed out that the Utopians possessed a commendable fearlessness, that they acknowledged social evils, and dared to suggest or to picture plans which should usher in a brighter day. The cults, too, are fearless. They ignore jest and ridicule; they will stand their ground for their principles and beliefs—but unfortunately so much of this has little social potency.

A number of the cults are pre-millenarian and as such they make mighty ineffective social prophets or social saviors. The world is beyond redemption; the end must soon be; the final consummation cannot long be delayed. They expect Jesus "to set off the fireworks by a miraculous leap from the temple pinnacle."⁹ It is further pointed out that "apocalypticism had set up the theory of the two eras, 'this age' and 'the coming age' and separated them by a chasm."¹⁰ Pre-millenarian

⁷ S. N. Patten, *Social Basis of Religion*, p. 74.

⁸ *Op. cit.*, p. 307.

⁹ W. Rauschenbusch, *Christianizing the Social Order*, p. 64.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 65.

cults would ignore this chasm, but it is just in this chasm that "this age" finds opportunity for advance and improvement. In this chasm utopian ideals are posited and striven for.

Professor Dealey¹¹ points out that such institutions as law, medicine, and the church tend to be static and in them precedents, dogmatism, and vested interests unite to maintain the system and to suppress innovations. Telic progress is not readily observable in them. Like them, the cults have little of the pioneering spirit; they do not push out into the frontiers of social adventure; do not so quickly blaze new trails, unless we accept their utopian schemes for what they may be worth. The cults are not content with religious life as they find it, nor are they to be too harshly criticized for that, except that their solutions and their utopias are almost always eccentric, fanatical, or the product of sheer ignorance. Their strongly individualistic and complacent attitude fails to reveal very much telic purpose in striving for the perfectibility of human society.

Utopian ideals are intensely real for dreamers. But the cults are not so much given to dreaming; the world in which they function is very real; the complex situations into which they sometimes get are of great moment to them. As an urge to concerted effort they fix their choice upon an ideal which they hold to be practicable and possible of attainment, and proceed to translate their theories into practice. So in their idealism, limited as it is, may be seen a social cogency which must be taken into account when the measurement of social forces is attempted.

¹¹ *Op. cit.*, p. 367.

Chapter Eleven

THE ELEMENTS OF REACTION AND SCHISM AMONG THE CULTS

"The greatest vicissitude of things amongst men is the vicissitude of sects and religions."—Bacon

One cannot approach the problem of reaction or schism in any sphere without sensing how universal this tendency really is. Deeply ingrained in the human constitution is the inclination to revolt, whenever snags are struck and differences of opinion encountered, or when viewpoints clash and conscience protests. It is an easy matter to become critical of others who are on the peak of some reactionary movement or to become skeptical of the motives of members of a schismatic group, while personally enjoying comparative tranquility on some plateau, which after all, is but a level stretch of an erstwhile peak worn down by a longer season of exposure to the rational or experimental elements of the nature of things. Many plateaus of self-complacency, indifference, or even satisfaction, border dangerously near other projecting peaks, which for the time may be hidden from view by clouds of ignorance, lethargy, or incompetency.

Life is not static though it may have its levels; it is an ever thrilling adventure in becoming. And the birth of every advance movement has always been, and always will be attended with travail of body and soul as it enters the mad and onrushing scenes of change, of conditions yet to be.

Psychologically, the theories which are advanced to explain social revolution obtain very largely in explanation of religious upheavals. The analogy is often quite interesting. Religion as an agency of social control has sometimes sought to prevent the orderly processes of the mechanism of social readjustment taking their natural course by laying undue stress upon

the golden past or by fostering current institutions or conditions after their maximum efficiency had become a matter of serious doubt. Intolerant or repressive measures are often resorted to, in religion as in politics, with the result that discontent, antagonism, or revolt are engendered.

Utopian thinkers sometimes present impossible ideals, which, nevertheless, possess an element of motive power. Agitators or ingenious spirits voice discontent which may be observed behind the scenes or discerned beneath the surface. Criticism precedes social change, and religious change as well. And when a group and its leaders grow sufficiently convinced of the justice of their claims or position, or powerful enough in number, they will no longer support the existing order of things, but will seek to effect some change.

Change may result in any number of forms; it may be orderly, it may be convulsive, revolutionary, divisive, or schismatic. Whatever its form, it is almost always the result of protest against the existing order or procedure. Close upon the heels of the "Babylonian Captivity" followed the Great Papal Schism, accompanied by great unrest. The spectacle of two popes, sometimes three, excommunicating and anathematizing each other was by no means edifying. This schism became so distressing to the nations of Europe that concerted measures for the restoration of unity were earnestly considered. Division and strife which spread through the whole Church produced such a distressing situation and made conditions so intolerable that the cardinals of the popes involved called a number of councils to heal the schism, which was eventually effected by the Council of Constance.

But no council, no king, and no pope could prevent nor ever heal the greatest of all schisms which rocked the Church—the Protestant Reformation. Aside from any and all wholesome effects which finally came to Christendom as the result of this division, many years of suffering, privation, mental torment, and even blood-shed were involved before comparative peace could be restored. And indeed, after more than four centuries one can still discover the scars of battle, and wounds

which are often opened or which have never even been permitted to heal.

Schism is the "familiar hazard which has beset almost every institution in the history of human effort" with no special preference for the one or the other. The Church is not in lonely company. Labor organizations, schools of thought, political camps, and fraternal bodies are just a few which share this common fate with the Church. Take, for instance, the latter group—the fraternal or secret orders. Among these groups jealousies arise, factions appear, cliques rule, minorities protest—and schisms are established. The Order of Owls has had secession twenty times since 1906. The entire gamut of fraternal bodies that borrow their nomenclature, their parlance, and get the suggestions for their ritual from bird, beast, and fowl are almost all schismatic bodies. And yet the jolly procession goes on. The original bodies may have had various reasons for organization, and not unusually they were protest. For instance, the Order of Elks, primarily a social and benevolent society was founded in New York in 1866 as a protest against the excise laws. But whether protest or schism, the net effect has never been to destroy fraternalism itself.

And so religious wars and upheavals, movements of protest, schism, division,—indeed, denominationalism with its pot-pourri of cults, all exert influences which are world-wide and which stretch across the centuries. But withal, religion itself has not been destroyed nor its ultimate purposes defeated.

Religion in America is somewhat like Joseph's coat of many colors; its variegated forms are attributable to a host of causes, chief of which may be as Professor H. R. Niebuhr¹ points out: economic, provincial, nationalistic, racial, or immigratory. These factors are largely ecabatic, that is to say, the denominational divisions of American religion are largely the result or consequence of them rather than that they were deliberately or purposely determined by them.

Resulting more or less inevitably from these conditioning

¹ Cf. H. R. Niebuhr, *Social Sources of Denominationalism*, Chapters II, V, VI, VII, and IX.

social factors, the various religious denominations may become teleological in their later progress and development. An analogy might be that of any child, who having no choice in the matter of his birth, nevertheless, may have much and finally all to say as to the end or purpose of his own life.

Professor A. E. Holt in a discussion of the "religious Garden of Eden" presented by the religious life which "has come up out of the woods, off the farms, and out of the cities,"² intimates that "Protestantism will always be ragged behind and in front."³ Since the cults are largely parasitic movements, hanging on for dear life, it may well be that he had them in mind when he said "ragged behind," for certainly they cannot in the main be said to be altogether forward movements. They are very reactionary in spirit and sometimes revolutionary in method. They would not dissent nor bolt if they were not absolutely convinced that they had a truth, perhaps even *the* truth, in their possession, worthy of special nurturing or defence, to which they pledge themselves with great devotion. Not caring to cast pearls before the swine they proceed to become divisive and reactionary. "The sectarian order has grown up on the false theory that if a group possesses some special truth or other Christian treasure the thing to do is to withdraw from others in order to preserve it. . . . But the way to preserve any spiritual treasure is to contribute it."⁴

Of nothing, then, are the cults more convinced, than that they have been divinely called, either by vision, dream, voice, or conscience. Their credentials, as also their declaration of purpose, they would rest on the Biblical injunction, "Be not unequally yoked with unbelievers." (II Cor. 6:14). The seeming righteousness of their cause inspires a conviction which so often leads them to reactionary excesses and subjects them to the scorn and ridicule of their neighbors. But

² A. E. Holt, *Religion, American Journal of Sociology*, May 1929, p. 1116.

³ *Ibid.*, p. 1116.

⁴ Editorial, *The Christian Century*, Jan. 1, 1930, p. 7.

this has no deterrent effect upon their zeal. Not to discount in the least any benefit that may often result from reaction or protest, we can heartily sympathize with people when they tire of the agitation for the betterment of humanity or the promises of the millenium in the name of sectarian religion. In their excessive enthusiasm for reform, sectarians will storm the citadel of "false doctrines," when really the part of wisdom would consist in sane and sensible educational movements that look forward to the orderly development of society on a sound and rational basis.

A "tamed cynic" speaking of the ethical impotency of present-day religion suggests that "no moral project can be presented and no adventure made without resistance from the traditionalists and debate among experimentalists."⁵ And continuing he pleads, "If the church could only achieve schism on ethical issues!" Minor schismatic factions and dissenting minorities there are aplenty, with traditionalists on both sides of the line, but few, if any, of these groups reacted primarily on ethical grounds. The fact of the matter is that most of the cults dissented originally against theological positions, harmless social customs, or in defense of "pet notions," fanciful theories, and empty traditions. Such nonconcurrence or schizophrenetic attitudes have often rendered their adherents socially impotent. Schism is to be decried unless constructive social forces are thereby released or created.

Let us be specific. The Mennonites are an "old European social protest group," about as reactionary, schismatic, and backward looking as any of the cults anywhere. Really to appreciate the intensity of the schismatic spirit which has taken hold of the followers of Menno, one should remember that there are no less than one hundred and twenty different groups of these folks which have branched off the main trunk. And the end is not yet.

The main body of these multitudinous groups is the least reactionary, the most progressive, and has strong proclivities

⁵ R. Niebuhr, *Leaves from the Notebook of a Tamed Cynic*, p. 75.

toward the Methodist church and toward doing things in a normal way. But the reactions on the part of the many other divisions against all modern tendencies vary from one extreme to the other. So set are they against things worldly that they have grown to be very suspicious of everything that may be new. The shaven upper lip is a protest against the military mustache. Their dress must conform to certain styles divinely patterned. Lightning-rods and birth-control are taboo. Filial trust in Divine Providence is denied by any security which life insurance may bring.

Every new schism among them is always a step toward yet greater conservatism. The most conservative and reactionary group, the Amish, are opposed to the use of buttons on their clothing, preferring hooks and eyes, although in this, as in the matter of a paid ministry, the use of the sword, and protest against the authority of civil government, the sinister influences of modern life are making their encroachments tell with decided effect. This latter group is opposed to Sunday schools, revival meetings, store-bought suspenders, telephones, top-buggies, musical instruments, bicycles, furnaces, hymn-books with the musical score, and harmony in singing. Curtains, pictures, and carpets, they stoutly maintain, are evidences of pride, and not to be tolerated in a truly Christian home. But more and more the Mennonites are yielding, though stubbornly, to the pressure of modern life and ways, and are adapting themselves to conditions as they find them in a progressive world about them.

The Shakers are another group more other-worldly than wise, and their protest-attitude toward life is costing them their existence. Refusing to adapt themselves to the world, they find themselves rapidly becoming extinct, their future behind them.

The Shaker chair industry, known everywhere, has suffered immensely by the encroachments of a machine age. This fate is shared by all the industries by which they support themselves and their villages. Elder William Anderson, head of the chair industry at Mount Lebanon, N. Y., died in 1930

at the age of ninety. He was a picturesque figure in his latter years with curls reaching to his shoulders. He wore a Shaker hat and a long coat of the style of 1870. He illustrates how the members of his cult refused to adapt themselves to the world. Like him all the men wear long blue coats, and the women severe garments to conceal all feminine charm as a protest against sex and the world.

One of the shibboleths of the First Christian Century Fellowship, popularly known as Buchmanism, is "you can't give what you haven't got." In emphasizing vital religious experience and deep mysticism this cult protests against the deficiencies and the rationalizations of the twentieth century. With its high emotionalism it hopes to counteract the sins of the *intelligentia*. But mysticism, unless duly guarded, is a dynamic which can lead to much perversion, as witnessed by this particular cult in its undue emphasis upon the sex emotion. This vital religious emphasis, it is important to note, usually, if not invariably, follows periods which have marked a great deal of wrangling over doctrinal statements, and when the intellectual aspects of religion have received more than their just due. The times of Whitefield and the Tennents evidenced this. The period of revival in the early part of the nineteenth century followed in the wake of Deism and infidelity. And in this day of changing theologies, Buchmanism is coming to the fore and giving signs that the lusty babe is not yet prepared to give up the ghost.

The Mormons have severed all connections with every other American religious group. Like the First Century Christian Fellowship under Buchman, but lacking its deeply spiritual note, they protest against the church of the modern day and attempt to put the church on an apostolic basis again, viewing all modern inventions as heresies. The movement of such a protest-group is backward, because an age that is gone is gone forever and cannot be reproduced at any later time, the Buchmanites and the Mormons, notwithstanding.

But in spite of its aloofness the foundations of the Mormon church were rocked by two major schisms. The larger one

was headed by the widow and sons of the founder of the new religion, when in 1852, on the publication of the revelation authorizing polygyny, the genuineness of which they denied, they led many of the Latter Day Saints into a new church organization, calling themselves the "Reorganized Church of Jesus Christ of the Latter Day Saints." Another faction broke off relations with the original church in 1869, remaining in Utah, but calling themselves "The Church of Zion." It was opposed to the despotism of the president and the priesthood, and advocated freedom of thought and action. Both of these schisms caused the original church great concern.

Certain phases of the religious paranoia of the Shakers, of Aimee McPherson Hutton, and of Frank Buchman also took possession of the Russellites. Fire and brimstone theology never was very popular. After "intensive study" Pastor Russell came to the conclusion that hell is a myth and a frightful heresy. As a protest against the gospel of a Moody, a Sam Jones and other evangelists, he came to the fore to begin a successful ministry. The doctrine of immortality as taught by evangelical preachers, he said, is based upon Satan's lie. Of course, Russell believed in immortality, but not in the kind taught by the Church. And so he made post-haste to rise up against that kind and to substitute his own. His was a protest theology.

The Church, expounding the doctrine of eternal torment and punishment over against eternal salvation, gave the Spiritualists their cue. Their progress is chiefly due to reaction against the indefiniteness with which inquirers into the mystery of death and the world were turned away. But like the other cults, this one was not spared by schisms and at least four similar groups have come into existence with but one explanation,—dissatisfaction, protest, reaction.

So Christian Science. This misnamed cult arose as a protest against materialism, accepted religious forces and validations, and against somber theology. But its chief protest was against the use of drugs in the cure of bodily ailments. The

perpetual process of schism has attended Mary Baker Eddy's cult all along the way. The way of the cults is not easy. In this connection a biographer of Mary Baker Eddy says, "The seeds of rebellion were in the first church organization. The reactionary effect observable in many of the early students was to repeat itself. . . . Rebellion now broke forth with violence in a group of students who walked out in a body."⁶ And again the same writer says of another revolt, "Thus it was that a group of rebels had coalesced within the Christian Science Association. They were not without examples for their dereliction."⁷

And did not Mrs. Augusta E. Stetson, threatening to erect a temple in New York which would "rival in beauty any other religious structure in America" give Mrs. Eddy great concern? "In 1909 she (Mrs. Stetson) was deprived of her right to teach and practice and charged with an attempt to 'control and to injure persons by mental means.'"⁸

New Thought also is one of the reactions against Christian Science which came before the world with its therapeutic teachings and through absent treatment offering health, prosperity, and happiness. So reaction and schism go on *ad infinitum*. This does seem to be the spice of the life of the cults.

Further reactions often follow initial counter tendencies, as we have readily observed, for it is an extremely difficult matter to change collective habits. "A change may be initiated and temporarily established by a majority, or even by a minority; but for a change to become permanent in a free society the mass of the group has to be brought sooner or later to the change; otherwise a new party of revolt may form."⁹ So deadly in earnest are the cults and so convinced of the righteousness of their cause that they proceed with sanguineous fervor to change the collective religious habits

⁶ S. Wilbur, *Life of Mary Baker Eddy*, p. 268.

⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 324.

⁸ C. W. Ferguson, *The Confusion of Tongues*, p. 210.

⁹ C. A. Ellwood, *The Psychology of Human Society*, p. 262.

and to convert the masses to assent to their doctrines, lest the chasm grow ever wider between the "saved and the unsaved."

If, as Professor Lichtenberger says,¹⁰ the characteristic aspects of teleological phenomena consist in conscious achievement, purpose, and effort, then reactionary and schismatic cults must constitute at least a cog in the wheels of telic progress. Achievement may be indirect; it may consist largely in calling attention to social error or religious deformities, but there can be no question as to the element of purpose and effort. In their own minds the cults are doing the only right thing and in the only right way for the soul-life of the individual and of the masses.

¹⁰ J. P. Lichtenberger, *The Development of Social Theory*, p. 384.

Chapter Twelve

THE CULTS AND SOCIAL PROGRESS

"A race that binds
Its body in chains and calls them Liberty,
And calls each fresh link Progress."

—R. W. Buchanan.

Religion and social progress are concepts which admit of wide interpretation, and unanimity of opinion as to their comparative values or inter-stimulative efficiency is not easily arrived at. Especially is this true in academic speculation. Religion is not necessarily a specific term. What may constitute religious conduct for one social group may be regarded as irreligion by another. So wide is its scope that an almost infinite number of types of spiritual attitudes may be listed under it. Religious sanction has often been given to the most degrading immoralities and to the use of perfidious and brutal weapons in the belief that the end justifies the means. History is replete with accounts of the most dastardly bloodshed and rancorous conflict in the name of religion. Obviously, in the light of all this, there must exist certain differences between religion and religion.

Various views also obtain as to the nature of and determining factors in social progress. That there is distinct social progress none would deny, but what constitutes the ideal toward which society is advancing and what the means are whereby it hopes to reach its goal of perfection are other matters in which a wide divergence of opinion may be discovered. They are few who would rule out altogether the contribution that religion makes toward social progress. More numerous are they who, while making allowance for religious factors in the social evolutionary process, seek to explain social progress apart from any divine purpose and contend that all religious conditioning factors are born of primary human instincts, emo-

tions, and desires. Man's inherent nature determines his religious beliefs and conduct, they say, which if left to the process of orderly development will ultimately eventuate in the perfect society.¹

The so-called naturalistic theories of social progress are wholly inadequate because they leave out the most important factor of personality. It is rather a synthesis of the various theories, the biological, economic, educational, and of that which Professor E. C. Hayes² calls the euthenic, plus the determinant of personality which may approximate a reasonable explanation of the progressive changes of human society. "The natural factors involved in the process of human development are only the means and conditions of social progress. They are the platform upon which social advancement is made."³ And well does Professor Rauschenbusch say that "progress is more than natural. It is divine."⁴ The Christian theory of social progress does not preclude the naturalistic theories, but goes a step farther, in maintaining that God works in and through personality, controlling the various phenomena of change and progress in the interest of human well-being.

The Christian sociologist believes that the ideas of social efficiency which dominate in the theories put forth in explanation of social reconstruction and advance, unless governed by spiritual values, will soon become so materialistic as to lead to social confusion and tragedy. In other words, a worthy religion and social progress which make allowance for the creative energy of personality must have a common and basic element if they are to achieve their highest and their best. This is the ideal of perfection related to Eternal reality. True religion must furnish or create social attitudes which are telic in content. "An essential phase of telic progress is a type of religious control which stimulates the finest develop-

¹ Vd. J. M. Barker, *The Social Gospel and the New Era*, p. 217.

² E. C. Hayes, *Introduction to the Study of Sociology*, p. 281.

³ J. M. Barker, *Op. cit.*, p. 220.

⁴ *Christianizing the Social Order*, p. 30.

ment of the highest spiritual nature of human beings.”⁵

The curve of human development on a naturalistic basis has been steadily upward and whenever the purifying and uplifting influences of the Christian religion became operative the curve's trend always showed a sudden and pronounced rise to new and higher levels.

Observe the ground which has been traversed between primitive family organization and family life of today. It is a far cry from the practices of medicine men to the achievements of Pasteur, or from the chieftain's tribal rulings to the legal commentaries of Blackstone. Contrast the horrors attendant upon the brutal massacres under Hannibal with the merciful touch of a Florence Nightingale. Over against the plight of galley slaves consider the redemptive program of a Wilberforce and Lincoln. Think of yesteryear's drudgery which the conquest of nature entailed and the comforts and leisure which the machine age affords. Compare the covered wagon and the pony express with telephony, the sailing smack with the non-stop flight of "The Spirit of St. Louis." Evidence of human progress needs no further attestation.

But the embarrassment which progress and success often create becomes apparent when we contrast our material gains with human relationships. Such gains readily furnish stimuli to selfishness, greed, competition, rivalry, and ambition which cannot but cause the social order to rock and quiver under its own weight. Permanence and progress in social relations are not necessarily assured nor are moral and spiritual inheritances guaranteed by the attainments of wealth, possession of technical knowledge or the miracles wrought by science. Possessing all the benefits of a materialistic progress, but lacking a socialized attitude one may easily lay himself open to the charge of being an enemy of society. A corrective to offset any over-emphasis of social advance in terms of the materialistic may be said to be found in religion, and above all, in the religion of Jesus. The social implications of his gospel strike

⁵ E. S. Bogardus, *Introduction to Sociology*, p. 469.

at the heart of all social parasites who prey upon their fellows; they create new movements and establish new institutions, which look to the enduring progress of society, thus evidencing that a Christian socialized attitude becomes the most revolutionary force in social progress.

So religion and social progress go hand in hand. Naturalistic principles and methods applied in the attempted solution of society's problems and as a cure for humanity's ills have proved insufficient. Unfortunately, blemishes of civilizations still abide, but wherever any reasonable and truly abiding progress is noted, not far off may be discovered the leavening effects of the religion of the Nazarene furnishing the dynamic and the ideals for the realization of a truly progressive social order.

In a study of "The Lutheran Community and American Society"⁶ Professor H. H. Maurer points out the self-sufficiency of the German Lutheran group who hold "membership in the 'right' and only church. Assured of being the only authentic kind of Christians, they have no doubt that they have remained in America the right and only kind." Their creed as a determining principle "inflicts limitations on the group will," and any Christian endeavor or cooperation with other religious bodies is *ultra vires*. "Having chosen the right road to heaven in his faith, in his *Gesinnung*, the German thinks that he is also on the right track in relation to progress." To take such a position is to be sectarian to the highest degree.

Many of the cults have assumed just such an attitude, making them non-conformist to some of the more important movements which look toward telic progress. Since they believe themselves to have found the only and true faith to the exclusion of all others, they do not deem it necessary nor essential that they lend their cooperation, which, of course, all true progress presupposes.

Christianity was conceived in the spirit of universal love and human service. "It started as an idealistic social move-

⁶ Vd. *American Journal of Sociology*, Sept. 1928, p. 282 ff.

ment in the Graeco-Roman world, marking the dawn of a religion of humanity.”⁷ It looked toward the establishment of the Kingdom of God upon earth. But two difficulties, among others, lay in the way of its objective development and complete triumph in the social order. On the one hand it “has been in the main taken by professed Christians as a theological and metaphysical doctrine rather than as a practical, ethical, and social attitude;”⁸ and on the other, its representatives have failed “to appreciate the importance of material and economic factors in the life of man.”⁹

There can be no question that many of the cults in their zeal for spiritual things do make a certain contribution to moral and spiritual thinking, and hence are exerting a salutary influence of some measure upon human conduct. But this is not enough; it leaves the task but half done. Worthy and socially effective religion is both other-worldly and mundane. Religion saturated entirely with doctrine cannot satisfy the hungry nor the shivering; it does not shield the unfortunate nor lift the “submerged tenth” by offering them a choice morsel of metaphysical speculation. Neither a scorpion nor a stone will ever answer the cry for bread. Whether it is more pleasing to God that the Sabbath be observed on the seventh day than on the first day of the week is not of primary importance when one is face to face with a poor soul who is finding it more difficult to maintain his social equilibrium than to determine when and how to worship the Unseen. Theology becomes a stumbling block to social progress just as soon as it overshadows the human needs of the work-a-day world.

The cults, and for that matter, many of the orthodox churchmen, too readily forget that Jesus came not only to save men’s souls, but to save the whole of man. He was much concerned about childhood, the sick, the underprivileged, the

⁷ C. A. Ellwood, A Sociological View of Christianity, *The Biblical World*, Sept. 1920, p. 455.

⁸ *Ibid*, p. 455.

⁹ *Ibid*, p. 455.

social outcast, the moral delinquent, and practical justice in the economic order. Nor did he draw his skirt about him and raise his hands and cry "Unclean!" when he found men and women ingulfed by their sin and selfishness, or swamped by unwholesome environment. Jesus was as much concerned about the social contacts of men as he was about their faith and their hopes for the salvation of their souls. In the Golden Rule to which the Master gave new content, the word "do" is emphasized and no reference whatever is made to any matter of faith.

Indifferent to efforts seeking the adjustment of human conduct to complex social situations or passively resistant to telic social process, many of the cults are rendered social liabilities. Isolation is not generally in the line of progress, and it is just here that numerous cults sin. They are not vitally concerned about social complexes. They will withdraw altogether from the scenes of constructive effort. Their devotees, as far as possible, are encouraged to hold themselves aloof from any and all influences which may undo their teachings or which subject their religious practices to scorn. In an environment congenial to their interests, then, they hope to establish more securely the novices in their faith, thus building up psychological defenses against "the world" and "mortal mind." Lest beginners or the not fully initiated be embarrassed by "religious scalp hunters" they are frequently advised to desist from all religious debate. A progressive society can hardly afford to tolerate such devisive sectarianism.¹⁰

The most cursory observation will reveal that there is a great deal of unrest in the religious world today, due very largely to the fact that stubborn dogmatism makes light of scientific discoveries. Indubitable truth needs no defense and makes narrow dogmatism appear ridiculous. Partial blame for much of this unrest must be laid at the door of the cults because so many of their teachings are contradictory to scientific facts and irreconcilable with the general conclusions of

¹⁰ Vd. E. S. Ames, *Religion*, pp. 294-95.

modern scientific education. When cult leaders are found who still believe that the world is flat and that modern astronomy leads to infidelity, or that the wearing of clothes is contrary to the original designs of the Creator, or that medication and surgery are inconsistent with the purposes of "Eternal Mind," or that polygyny is a safe and sensible practice securing ideal family organization, or that opposition to formal education is justified on the ground that Jesus never commanded it nor personally enjoyed it, then we must admit that at least to that extent, social stagnation or reversion has set in. Progress is extremely difficult with such an intellectual and creedal background. It is not so important that "millions now living will never die" as it is to realize that millions now living are already dead.

The eschatology of some of the cults may inspire the religiously unsophisticated to dispose of all their worldly goods in order to be duly prepared for the return of the Lord. It may establish others in a smug complacency which comes from the assured conviction that they are positively included in the 144,000 saved. The rest of the world is bad, neither possible of nor worth saving, for the Lord is close at hand. Adherence to such doctrines never did nor ever can animate one with any zeal for the salvaging of a grossly errant humanity.

The oriental cults have a substantial following in America. By some it has been held that the mystic and contemplative mood of this group offers a wholesome check upon the excessive speed and nervous agitation which so largely controls the occidental temperament. There may be a kernel of truth in this, perhaps. But with just allowance for their rather vague teachings on brotherhood, the service of man, purity and simplicity of life, gentleness and charity, and with all due respect for the martyrdom which has been inflicted upon some of these cults, we must confess that this oriental spirit of resignation is more or less harmful to the progressive western spirit.

Some of these highly speculative and pantheistic eastern

cults which reverence antiquity and base their authenticity upon "ancient and esoteric wisdom" impress one with the thought that they are very "much like a hodge-podge of uncertified and untested assertions."¹¹ A revamping of the past will not solve the problems that society presents in the living present. In a religion which, like the god Janus, looks both backward and forward at the same time, there can inhere very little social efficiency.

In an interesting chapter on "Private Interests Against the Common Good"¹² Walter Rauschenbusch presents a strong case against "those who sold out the common good for private profit" and in defense of the theory that invested interests are frequently pitted against public welfare and detrimental to the creation of a constructive public opinion. His contention "that the overgrowth of private interests has institutionalized an unchristian principle" cannot lightly be waved aside.

But is this evil limited to unreligious and private interests? Most certainly it is not. Some of the cults have amassed vast fortunes in the course of their history which have not always been invested in disinterested good-will. Through shrewd business manipulations and the tithe an inland empire, a *patria in patriae*, becomes possible, the very spirit of which is contrary to progressive and modern democratic policies. With a yearly income closely approximating four million dollars one does not wonder that it becomes possible for a cult with a membership of a little over six hundred thousand, highly centralized and largely isolated, to exercise almost unlimited temporal and spiritual despotism. Here permit another¹³ to speak at length. "The whole duty of the Mormon consists in thinking and doing as he is told, even as regards his most private and personal affairs. The president may order or forbid a man to marry; a bishop may at any time enter any Mormon's house and issue whatever order he

¹¹ R. W. Sellars, *Religion Coming of Age*, p. 130.

¹² Vd. *Christianizing the Social Order*, p. 272 ff.

¹³ J. H. Blunt, *Dictionary of Sects and Heresies*, p. 354.

pleases. All are compelled to deal only at the authorized shops and stores, which are managed on the cooperative principle for the benefit of the church, that is, the enrichment of the leaders. By means of a constant system of espionage, any breach of rules is promptly noticed, and if it be persisted in, the offender is cut off from the church and every means used to crush him. If any man secedes or is cast out, all Mormons are forbidden to have any intercourse with him, even to give him food or shelter; sometimes violence, even to death has been used, and in such a way that it cannot easily be proved; moreover, accused Mormons are usually acquitted by packed juries."

Obviously, then, the temptation to impede the wheels of really effective social progress is not peculiar to certain unprincipled and resourceful individuals, but may also be the besetting sin of a closely integrated group functioning in the name of religion. Even a selfish world finds it difficult to reconcile a selfish religion with the currents that are hoped to make lasting contributions to the common weal.

The process of socialization, "conscious, intentional and welcomed telic action" is difficult to much that is in human nature, and therefore, not especially attractive to the highly individualistic, divergent sectarian group, whose primary interests lie in the propagation of their own and often peculiar religious tenets. In spite of their zeal in this direction it is imperative that they give some thought to social invention, which as Lester F. Ward points out "consists in making such adjustments as will induce men to act in the manner most advantageous to society."¹⁴ But the cults, in the main, are otherwise minded. The problems of society which press for solution deserve cooperative effort and most certainly not such an apathetic attitude as is revealed by these groups. Such adjustments should be made by them as would permit whatever is good in their doctrines to function socially, so that human and environmental relationships will make it easier for men to do right and more difficult to do wrong.

¹⁴ *Pure Sociology*, p. 569.

Chapter Thirteen

THE CULTS AND CULTURAL LAG

"Change lays not her hand upon truth."—Swinburne.

One of society's most treasured possessions is its store of cultural ideas and ideals. High and noble thoughts which possess both uplifting and lifting-up power and which keep aloft the plane of men's aspiration and achievement are a telic contribution of supreme importance. Civilization has been wrought out of rough and uncouth material, especially so, in the ethical and spiritual realm where truly abiding values are evolved. "Man doth not live by bread alone." (Deuteronomy 8:3)

The ancient Greeks used to say with considerable truth that "the good is often the enemy of the best." For just as soon as man comes to hold that the good is the best, or at least, good enough, he has ceased to grow; and such static thought all too soon opens the flood-gates to retrogression or reversion to former or lower cultural levels. This holds true in the material as well as in the ethical or spiritual world. Economic attainments and material benefits, as laudable as they may be for the individual and for society, are only the means through which culture is advanced. The more human capacity is developed in the direction of aesthetic, ethical, intellectual, and spiritual appreciation, the more readily will society emerge from under a crass materialism into a culture worthy of the name, and so constitute life that it may be found worth living, not for the few only but for the many.

Culture is cumulative and stratified, one kind building upon another. It cannot be legislated nor produced overnight. Its ideals must be slowly absorbed and thoroughly assimilated before any genuine progress can be noted. Social change leading to higher cultural levels may sometimes require generations, if not centuries, so that social leadership must in-

variably content itself with the thought that only posterity will realize the fruits of its labors.

Every social group is characterized by cultural patterns which are influenced by geographic, biologic, psychologic, and sociologic factors. Just what defines or constitutes their programs and norms is not commonly agreed upon since they vary with individuals and with communities. Culture is itself a highly complex organic process which defies every attempt to reduce it to definite and fixed rules. Whatever else may be said about it, it will readily be found that in the ascendent scale it is of a kindred spirit with religion.¹

Religion has always been found, in all stages of culture, to give support to "mores" and traditions, and in the higher stages to moral standards and ideals. The higher the stage of culture the nobler has been the type of religion which permeated it and reflected its social life and intellectual progress. Backward communities and sluggish races, therefore, always find themselves mirrored in their religious practices, even though they may be surrounded by the highest type of civilization.

It is impossible to conceive of contemporary culture with a social morality which is devoid of religious sanction. Our intricate social life demands such highly complex adjustments that an intensified social religion becomes correspondingly more imperative. And to some it would indeed seem that consequently the death of religion would mean the death of all higher civilization.²

The human race in the course of its development has already passed through two cultural stages, namely, savagery and barbarism, and is now in the third, that of civilization. Social scientists, though they do not presume to predict future events, seem to think that the present civilization is passing and that we have come to the threshold of a new social order in which social change is not left to chance nor to fate, but in which social engineers shall be able more

¹ Vd. C. H. Cooley, *Social Process*, pp. 75-77.

² Vd. C. A. Ellwood, *The Reconstruction of Religion*, p. 64.

and more to plot the direction of social forces, and to direct the activities of society in an intelligent and well-ordered manner.³

We are somewhat concerned about the new day in which we shall have to face the problems of personal and social adjustments to be made necessary, among other things, by the economic sciences, socialized industry, automatic devices, cooperative societies, credit economy, and the new psychology. Will religion be able to fill its place or to measure up to the new exactions that shall be levied upon it? Of progressive religion there is little to fear in this direction. There is no doubt, however, that many of the religious groups, which are loathe to adapt themselves to present-day conditions, will suffer complete disintegration. Moreover, new ones will rise up out of the debris as an inevitable by-product of such ultra-conservative religion, which because of its very nature, is more than likely to resist cultural changes. Such changes are mightier than non-adaptive religion. Unless religion adjusts itself to meet changing social situations it can offer no legitimate defense for its continuance. Especially is this true of the religious cults. Unless they adapt themselves to cultural progress the charge must stand that they are ecclesiastically, economically and socially wasteful.

Through a prolonged historical process some of the cults have succeeded in creating a set of attitudes which lead them to resist cultural change, either actively or passively. Possibly here some of the Mennonite groups might be held up as exhibit A. Theirs is a long and interesting, though sometimes a pathetic history. In their reverence for their historic past they are comparable to the Church of which Rauschenbusch said that "it is venerable with age and it venerates its own venerability."⁴ The martyr complex and the great body of tradition based upon literally interpreted Scriptural warrants inspire them to stand their ground against overwhelming odds and in spite of persecution.

³ Vd. Scott Nearing, *Where is Civilization Going?* p. v.

⁴ *Christianizing the Social Order*, p. 34.

A few glimpses into their beliefs and practices will suffice to illustrate cultural lag and apathy toward progress. A Mennonite Manual entitled "Christianity Defined" and published in Hagerstown, Md. in 1903 is authority for the following instruction to the faithful. Christians, they are told, can take no part in government and cannot qualify as citizens, for Christ's Kingdom is not of this world; and as Paul says, "the powers that be are ordained of God." (Romans 13:1) Nor can defenseless Christians vote, for it is impossible to belong to two kingdoms at once, the worldly and the spiritual. The relation of the Christian to his government is that of an alien. When citizens vote, as for instance, for the President of the United States, they place the sword into his hands, since he is the commander-in-chief of the army and navy. Furthermore, it is not permissible for the faithful to serve on juries, lest they sin against the divine injunction, "Judge not that ye be not judged." (Matt. 7:1) To attend funerals, weddings, and church services, conducted by ministers of other churches is strictly enjoined against, for so to do is to acknowledge the leaders of other faiths to the disavowal of their own faith and traditions.

They adhere strictly to a non-conformity in dress. Wearing apparel, they say, became a necessity after sin entered the world. In the divine order it was designed for the promotion of decency, comfort, and service, but through the pride and vanity begotten of sin in the heart of man, the order of God was perverted. The women wear the old Shaker hat and "avoid bonnets like the plague." The men of the Amish Mennonite order wear hooks and eyes on their clothes in the place of buttons, and are not permitted to wear suspenders. They must grow a beard as soon as they are able. Most of them still use the language of their ancestors.

An interesting Mennonite group of some two hundred and fifty families may be found near Middlefield Village, in Geauga County, Ohio. A few years ago they stated that their religion would not permit them to attend school beyond the fourth grade. After repeated arrests they submitted to send-

ing their children up to the eighth grade. Rather than send older children to high school many families have migrated to other states where educational requirements were not so stringent, or sent their children to live with relatives where legal school requirements were lower. These people are known, however, to set aside their religious convictions with reference to the ballot when school elections are held. Then they are led by the opposition, turn out *en masse* and vote down any constructive school issues which are submitted.⁵

The religious psychology of the Doukhobors is not very unlike that of the Mennonites. In this group disintegration, due to cultural lag, has long since set in. Here is a religious group without property, without riches or want, and so far as one can discover, without greed, hate, lust, or crime. They have no use for police, jails, courts, nor guns. But having turned their backs upon modern civilization they have begun to deteriorate. It is estimated that at least one-third of their number, particularly the youth, have turned upon the faith of their fathers, conduct which was made inevitable through their contact with modern civilization, machinery, the railroad; visits to towns, and through the discovery of the pleasure of steak, whiskey, and tobacco.

In an article by Peter Verigin⁶ on "The Truth About the Doukhobors" this outstanding leader points out that his people consider themselves to be citizens of the world, and therefore see no reason why they should register vital statistics with the authorities nor pay taxes. Furthermore, marriage contracts concern only the two parties involved. Opposition to scouting is based on the ground that the boys are taught military drills, a "pernicious and malicious invention of this age." Schools are also taboo, because a commercial system of education creates an insatiable greed for easy money and luxury.

The most erratic group among this Russian peasant sect

⁵ Cf. H. E. Ryder, The Problem of the Amish as Related to School Attendance, *School and Society*, Jan. 2, 1926.

⁶ Vd. *The Independent*, July 3, 1913, pp. 21-25.

call themselves Freedomites (Svobodniki.) ⁷ They abstain from all food which has touched fire, and do not eat butter, eggs, nor drink milk. They will not kill bird, beast nor fowl, and for that reason refuse to wear anything made of hides. Animals are not worked nor domesticated for they ought not be made subject to man. Neither is the use of machines tolerated. They prefer to pull their own ploughs and wagons. The Freedomites believe that only the soul is sacred and that the body has served its only purpose just as soon as the soul has departed. For this reason they refuse to bury the dead, throwing them into the fields for wild beasts to feast upon. This highly eccentric religious cult believes that God is love and love means freedom, absolute and everlasting. Hence their name. Man-made laws, books and priests prescribe restrictions which are contrary to the dictates of the inner spirit.

The strange mental slant which countenances an anti-social philosophy relative to the wearing of clothes is revealed in an interview with a member of this cult as follows: "When you have freedom you need no clothes, no money, nothing. . . . What is there about the body that man should be ashamed of? If God is not ashamed of it, if it is the very image of God, why should man be? Did Adam have clothes? Do beasts wear clothes? Do birds wear clothes? . . . Only Man's mind is poisoned . . . by the things that rob him of freedom, and that's why he thinks that the body is a terrible thing and should be covered up. . . . Even the clothes we wore were a sign of slavery. . . . Then in protest against the slavery in the world we disrobed. We were arrested, and sent to an insane asylum." ⁸

But four or five groups of the Holy Rollers, sarcastically so called, have managed to survive the disintegration process which the extreme literalism of their Scripture interpretation has made almost inevitable. Looseness of organization per-

⁷ Vd. M. G. Hindus, As in the Days of Adam, *The Century*, Dec. 1925, p. 208 ff.

⁸ *Ibid*, pp. 213, 214.

mits looseness of doctrine, and consequently most of the Holy Roller sects have been harassed from time to time by abominable scandals and annoying heresies. Sexual excesses have been noted, as well as a strong proclivity toward free love and even promiscuous kissing during services.

Except among the Pentecostal Nazarenes, they are strongly opposed to a college-trained ministry. "Because of their godless tendencies" the public schools of our country have also aroused their suspicions.

Of nothing does modern civilization boast more justly than of the advance made in medicine and surgery. To disregard these agencies in the cure of human ills and miseries is to trail behind a culture which is forward-looking and largely progressive. The Holy Roller, Four Square Gospel, Unity, New Thought, and Christian Science therapeutics, while not to be decried wholly and unqualifiedly, have, nevertheless, permitted a great deal of needless suffering to continue, and so handicapped many individuals and exposed communities to plague and disease that to legislate against such practice, though perhaps not strictly in keeping with the spirit of a free democracy, would be to render a distinct human service.

The culture attained by the Mormons does not bear too close scrutiny. Its defects are not easily disguised. While polygyny, the chief stone of offense in this modern Islam of America, is no longer openly practiced, the philosophy which justifies it, has not yet been set aside. The Mormons firmly believe that this doctrine is a divine institution and that its discontinuance as a practice does in no wise discount its righteousness as a principle or doctrine. Polygyny is essentially an institution of barbarism. Time was when the polygynous form of family may have been advantageous and have served in the interest of social survival, but viewed from the standpoint of our civilization, it stands condemned without reserve.

An authority on Mormonism⁹ says of polygyny that it

⁹ W. M. Paden, *The Vitality of Mormonism*, *The Missionary Review of the World*, Aug. 1928, p. 653.

"was a diabolically shrewd way of holding leaders of the Mormon cult together." Once they became enmeshed in it, "they were tied up in the Mormon church for life. Moreover, it left its mark on their children—a mark which did not embarrass them so long as they remained in a Mormon community or in the Mormon church."

A similar degenerate philosophy inspires the special excursions which are arranged for the young folks of Utah and southern Idaho, who, purporting to display unusual zeal for the salvation of their non-Mormon forbears, wish to submit to a peculiar rite of baptism in their behalf. Joseph F. Smith, late president of the church was wont to say, "We do more work to save the dead than we do to save the living."¹⁰ Such a pernicious doctrine, fitting into other civilizations than our own, is further testified to by their theory regarding marriage. "The faithful Mormon who in this life has been prevented by some involuntary cause, such as an early death, from doing his duty as a child-producer, may have wives 'sealed' to him. In this case another person, appointed by the president, acts for the dead man; and if any children are born they are reckoned to the latter."¹¹

Here, then, we have some evidence of clever creedal machinations which cannot but shock the sensitized and socialized conscience. Such doctrines are convenient and practicable in a community of mental and spiritual hybrids, the progeny of a cross between Mohammedanism on the one hand and Protestant and Catholic Christianity on the other.

Just as society may be retarded in its development through ignorance, unwise prohibitions, unscientific regulations, and cultural lag, so a religious group may suffer the same fate through its selfishness, narrowness, and restrictive measures enforced by unprogressive creedal doctrines and intolerant dogmatic positions. Inflexibility in habits and institutions and failure in adaptation to the stern but unavoidable encroachments of a machine age or to the relentless innovations

¹⁰ Quoted, *Ibid*, p. 652.

¹¹ J. H. Blunt, *Dictionary of Sects and Heresies*, p. 352.

of world economy may throw the cults (and conventional churches too, for that matter) out of equilibrium with changing life conditions. This is a safe and sure way to disintegration. In order to justify their existence, religious groups of whatever stamp, dare never be a single step behind cultural advance, but, abreast of the best in civilization, they must supply the vision, foresight, and inspiration of which the highest type of effectual leadership always is capable.

PART FOUR

THE PERSONAL INTERESTS OF THE CULTS
AND CRITIQUE

Chapter Fourteen

THE 'CULTS AND THEIR LEADERSHIP

"Man is a dupeable animal. Quacks in medicine, quacks in religion, and quacks in politics know this, and act upon that knowledge. There is scarcely anyone who may not, like a trout be taken by tickling."—Southey.

It is largely true that human groups are stimulated in their thought and conduct processes by pattern actions which leadership affords. As a social creature man is essentially imitative and therefore easily given to the following of leaders. When human groups find themselves in a condition where adjustment to a complex situation is imperative, their behavior is largely colored by the action-patterns of the relatively few of the group, who with a psychophysical plus are able to demonstrate or propose the solution or way out. Social progress has always been dependent to an extraordinary degree upon the guidance and direction of pioneering minds who blaze the trail to social achievement.

Group leadership is impossible without the adhesion of the group to its chosen leader. If his leadership is to become socially profitable and effective, it must, naturally, be first established that his motives and his ideals are adaptable to and compatible with the group aspirations and needs. But as soon as mistrust, suspicion, or lack of sympathy inject their virus into the group mind, whether justifiably or no, the influence of the leader of the hour is a closed chapter and his persuasive powers are no longer effective.

We observe, then, that the motives of leadership play an integral and important role in group life and activity. As it is true of water that it rises no higher than to its own level, so a group attains unto levels and reaches goals only as they are embodied in its leaders or by them held before the group. Leadership may possess laudable qualities that commend

themselves to right thinking groups or individuals, but there may also inhere in it the potency of disaster. Unwise leadership, manifesting itself in a passion for power, financial gain, personal prestige, or lustful indulgence has disrupted many energetic enterprises and made futile many auspicious programs which were in other respects deserving of utmost support.

Whether a leader is determined biologically or by social environment is a question that has not yet produced an unqualified and unanimous answer. The protagonists of either theory will have little difficulty in finding abundant evidence to support their respective viewpoints. W. D. Wallis¹ seems to think that a leader is largely "a social system in himself, capable of taking from other cultures some new idea and giving this to his own group. He, more completely than the group, embodies the religious concepts and is the source of their development. To account for many of the phenomena of change and progress in the social order we must admit the reality of the individual as a separable determining agent. Though often borrowed from another group, these concepts are reinterpreted by the individual, infused with new meaning, and by him imposed upon the group."

On the other hand, however, cultural and social antecedents have been known to be of such nature as ordinarily would have inspired a leadership of unique opportunity, but failed to do so because other factors were uncontrollable, unfavorable, or untimely; or when social conditions were especially urgent or impressive, leadership is known to have been actually thrust upon mediocre individuals who were devoid of even the slightest semblance of genius, unless genius may also be ascribed to those possessing the ability to defraud, delude, or despotically to control.

Professor Clifford Kirkpatrick, in speaking of religious leadership² sums up the matter rather convincingly. It is his contention "that a biological variation may produce a unique

¹ *Messiahs: Christian and Pagan*, pp. 132, 133.

² *Religion in Human Affairs*, p. 221.

individual who may dominate even a hostile environment, given a minimum equipment of cultural antecedents; such an individual is by no means completely culturally determined. As a rule, however, religious change is due to an individual of ability, but not unique, who combines cultural antecedents, local or foreign, aided by an existing need and whose innovation after conception is influential, thanks to a receptive cultural situation. Leadership, then, is a social process not to be understood by a separate consideration of either the leader or his time."

To what extent do these elements of leadership combine to enter into leadership of the modern religious cults? What can be said of the character, motive and influence of the founders and leaders of these groups which have so largely deviated from type? What is the nature of the response and adhesion of the assemblage of anomalous religious people to their leaders? These are the questions which prompt a consideration of the type of leadership which influences group behavior and determines change and values in the social process.

Students of the cults have not failed to observe that women have always played a conspicuous part in spreading and abetting unorthodox or heretical teachings. Of such there come to mind at once the names of Ann Lee, Mary Baker Eddy, Annie C. Bill, Helena Petrova Blavatsky, Annie Besant, Katherine Tingley, the Fox sisters, Myrtle Fillmore, and Aimee McPherson Hutton. But to this list may be appended the names of an equally remarkable array of men whose contributions in like respect have most certainly not diminished the cluttering up of the machinery of social and religious progress. We think of Emanuel Swedenborg, Joseph Smith, Jr., Brigham Young, John Alexander Dowie, Wilbur Glenn Voliva, William Miller, Phineas P. Quimby, Savely Kapustin, Peter Verigin, Benjamin Purnell, Charles T. Russell, and Frank N. D. Buchman. Eccentricities in religious belief and conduct, obviously then, are not limited to the leadership of any particular sex. Both sexes have contributed their quota of de-

vious religions and sectarian organizations already too numerous.

Most of the cults have been founded by either men or women of more or less disordered intellects, but whose deficiency was offset materially perhaps, by a magnetic personality or some similar personal asset. It may have been a characteristic shrewdness which marked their efforts to hoist upon credulous people a system of religious practice that served selfishly to enrich and to empower. Inspiration, of course, via visions, trances, or other spiritual phenomena has always been instrumental in placing the sceptre of authority into their hands, and thereafter it was usually an easy matter to persuade the credulous and religiously agitated people, who were dissatisfied with existing religious conditions and beliefs, to believe that a divinely commissioned messenger with healing in his wings had arrived. There are always individuals almost without number who, protesting against lukewarmness, materialism, or rationalism, revel in mist and moonbeam philosophies. These shop around among esoteric religious wares, dwell on the fringe of religious endeavor and are always grateful, even for the crumbs that may fall from the table of those who are "just a little different."

The relation of many sect founders and leaders is believed to have been so intimate with God that their apotheosis was most readily attained. Some of the prophets of novel revelations, completely inundated by the blind loyalty and adoration of an admiring constituency, soon became self-deluded in the belief that, having become the special object of the favor of Diety, an actual incarnation has really taken place. Savely Kapustin, the first leader of the Doukhobors, so completely captivated the imagination of illiterate Russians that they fell down before him as before God. Said he to them, "As truly as the heaven is above me and earth under my feet, I am the true Jesus Christ your Lord."³ Peter Verigin, one of his successors and the present leader of that

³ Quoted by W. D. Wallis, *Op. cit.*, p. 170.

cult in Canada has also been held by many to be the Christ, and by others as a God-man or an earthly Deity.

Had not John Alexander Dowie been ousted from Zion City because of immoral practices, many of his devotees would have even more certainly believed that as "Elijah the Restorer" he was but one step removed from deification, a re-incarnation of the Messiah, the Son of God. Mrs. Annie Besant was regarded by many English-speaking Hindus as a goddess, and they were prepared to bring to her all the honor, adoration, and worship becoming such a goddess. Mrs. Besant was prepared to share such divine honors with Jiddu Krishnamurti, whom she introduced to the Western world as the embodiment of the World Teacher. To newspaper reporters who interviewed him while visiting the United States he is reported to have said, "I am the Voice of the Great Teacher. I have the Spirit. You may not believe it. I don't care; it makes no difference to me."⁴

Mother Ann Lee was received as the Mother of God and as the new messiah in whom the Christ spirit was consummated. Mary Baker Eddy is frequently mentioned as being in the same category with Jesus Christ, while her *Science and Health* is held on a par with the Bible,—is, in fact, referred to and used as final authority much more often than the Bible itself. Mrs. Augusta Stetson, although cut off from the fellowship with Christian Scientists, was prompted to issue a declaration of loyalty to her teacher in which she linked Mrs. Eddy's name with the name of Jesus Christ, regarding her equally worthy of devotion and loyalty as the founder of the Christian Science religion. To her end Mrs. Stetson was insistent in all her teachings and writings that Mrs. Eddy was a modern embodiment of Christ and that she assumed the same role in the modern world as did Jesus two thousand years ago.

Of course, an easy egress from mundane affairs and a practical approach to the plane of divinity was always found in

⁴ Quoted by C. W. Ferguson, *The Confusion of Tongues*, p. 157.

special revelations. To win a seat in the pantheon of the gods such revelations were always prerequisite. They always guaranteed a hearing and commanded profound and reverent respect. Credentials were secured by some mystical contact with Heaven.

While languishing in prison Ann Lee received her revelation. The announcement of what she had experienced convinced her followers of divine approval in her behalf, and assured her of an unswerving fidelity. In 1851 Mrs. Blavatsky "is said to have met her Master in the flesh, though she had known him psychically from childhood."⁵ Though dead, yet Helen Petrova Blavatsky speaks. Her posthumous Memoirs were "dictated from the Spirit-world, Upon the Typewriter, Independent of All Human Contact."⁶

When Joseph Smith, Jr. was not yet fifteen years of age there was vouchsafed to him a vision following a prolonged season of prayer. A second divine manifestation, unlike the first seen in the woods, came to him some three and one-half years later, but this time while he was in bed and at prayer. To his erstwhile conviction that the church was moribund there came the additional revelation that there really was no true church to be found anywhere. "The angel assured him that his prayers were heard and 'he was the dearly beloved of the Lord, and should be commissioned a priest after the order of Melchisedec, organizing a church of faithful persons in that line to receive the Lord in the Millenium.' . . . He was further 'told that the truth should spring out of the earth;' and then or at a later time, that the earth was the hill Cumorah, near his home."⁷ In due time the discovery of the golden plates from which the Book of Mormon was supposed to have been translated, was effected and another great fraud perpetrated upon an unwary and all too gullible world.

It is interesting to note how very much many of the cult leaders were impressed with their own ability to rend asunder

⁵ Quoted by *Ibid*, p. 137.

⁶ Quoted, *Ibid*, p. 139.

⁷ J. Q. Adams, *The Birth of Mormonism*, p. 19.

the veils of the obscure and occult. Theirs was believed to be the ability to learn and to receive hidden things or mysteries, to foretell coming events, to discover the whereabouts of lost objects, or the doers of secret acts. "The founders of some of our newest cults exhibit traces of shamanistic procedure. This is true of Joseph Smith, Jr., of Mrs. Eddy, and of Mr. Dowie, though of unequal degree. Each of these leaders mixed shrewd calculation with what gave itself forth as inspiration, and none of them acknowledged the mixture, but claimed super-individual authority for the whole."⁸ Thus these three cultists also found themselves in happy company with Benjamin Purnell and Charles T. Russell, who held forth in their respective domains as men upon whom wisdom and regal authority had fallen in abundant measure.

Contrary to common belief that formal education is necessary for religious leadership, it has been ably demonstrated by many cult leaders that a following can be commanded without it. As may be expected, of course, such unintelligent leadership is always limited, both in scope and intensity, and appeals very largely to limited groups or individuals whose hearts or passions play havoc with their heads.

Mrs. Blavatsky could boast of very little formal education. Ann Lee was handicapped in her eventful career by the fact that she could scarcely read or write. Benjamin Purnell, described by various writers as a shrewd and unlettered impostor in his best days, deemed education "less useful than dung." At school Mary Baker Eddy was never particularly bright, her fitful and hysterical attacks accounting for frequent absence from school. It was only in later years that she mastered, after a fashion, spelling, punctuation and composition. Her early writings which reveal a woeful deficiency that she carried with her well on into life, reflect her intellectual background. Her statement regarding her grammatical errors, given as a rebuff to her critics, is illuminating and an example *par excellence* how piety and divine manifestations can over-

⁸ G. A. Coe, *The Psychology of Religion*, p. 179.

come ignorance. Said she, "After my discovery of Christian Science, most of the knowledge I had gleaned from school-books vanished like a dream. Learning was so illumined, that grammar was eclipsed."⁹ Yet despite this declaration Mrs. Eddy's "lifelong ambition was to be considered a ranking intellect among the great."¹⁰ According to her own words, she would be as great a scholar as Mr. Franklin Pierce. Mrs. Eddy unquestionably did have native ability and a certain grandeur of vision, but the lack of formal education and mental discipline always left her pitiably deficient in logical or philosophical thinking. Nevertheless, she did attempt to plumb the profundities of religious and metaphysical mysteries but with very dubious success.

Joseph Smith, Jr. possessed less than ordinary intelligence. Of his family it was said that they "were a lazy, illiterate, drinking, shiftless, good-for-nothing lot, having no regular occupation, doing everything by turns, and nothing long, and living largely off their neighbors, while Joe, whose besetting sin then, as later, was lying, was considered the most worthless of them all. When he learned to read nobody knows."¹¹ However, he did have an impressionable and receptive mind, a tenacious memory and more than a normal share of imagination, and superstition colored his entire intellectual life.

It may not be just to over-emphasize boyish pranks and girlish weaknesses, the sins and follies of youth, but they do lend color to the character which later dominates the career of these leaders. While such characteristics may be submerged or subdued they do make explicable what would otherwise be hard to account for in leadership of this type. Leaders of the cults do not fall nor fit into a common mold, except it may be that of eccentricity. They most certainly do have what the psychologists call a plus or a minus. Their cultural lacks and sound judgment are completely eclipsed by heavenly visions and apparitions, all of which render his-

⁹ M. B. Eddy, *Retrospection and Introspection*, p. 10.

¹⁰ E. F. Dakin, *Mrs. Eddy*, p. 337.

¹¹ J. Q. Adams, *Op. cit.*, p. 14.

torical truths unessential to the life of the cults.

The obstinate and domineering attitude of cult leaders stands out as an incongruity over against the spirit of democracy which permeates modern life and thought. Very often they ruled with an iron will over a constituency that was like so much clay in their hands. Mrs. Blavatsky possessed a furious temper and an imperious will. It happened not infrequently that, notwithstanding distance travelled or expense involved, she would refuse admittance to a visitor knocking at her door, although the interview had previously been promised and arranged for. She would berate her visitors, who would in turn assume responsibility for Mrs. Blavatsky's attitude or excuse it by saying that their own unworthiness compelled her to refuse them an audience.

It was always exceedingly difficult for the followers of Benjamin Purnell to gain an audience with him because he always kept himself aloof from and avoided contact with the plebeianism of his followers. Even his most intimate followers deemed it an unique distinction if they were permitted to speak a few words with him. In addition to this personal aloofness he maintained an intractable system of discipline, insisting upon an instant obedience to his orders. Unnecessary conversation and visiting he refused absolutely to countenance, and, lest a frequent changing of sleeping quarters failed to discourage the formation of cliques, he added still another precautionary measure, that of a confession of every last movement or thought on the part of his followers.¹²

Angelus Temple is ruled by the dominating, though captivating personality of Aimee McPherson Hutton. In the by-laws which she has published and which rule the Temple we read, "Each applicant shall express his recognition of the fact that 'a house divided against itself cannot stand;' and his adherence to the policy of this association, that there shall be no disloyalty, insubordination, whispering, criticizing, or backbiting of this association or its leaders." In connection

¹² Vd. C. W. Ferguson, *Op. cit.*, p. 50.

herewith a writer¹³ suggests that "here again one catches that glint of steel muscle rippling beneath the soft curves of Aimee Semple McPherson's fleshly charm."

One suspects that to head an organization of the type and kind that we find at Angelus Temple a strong hand and an indomitable will must lurk somewhere in the background. Mrs. Hutton is reported saying,¹⁴ "Like the captain of a ship or the President of the United States, I am pastor and president of Angelus Temple, and as such am going to control my congregation. I have come back to take the helm."

The iron hand of the vain and autocratic Mrs. Eddy was no less apparent. A fretful, hysterical and arbitrary child, she held the centre of the stage in her parents' home, domineered her own home, and eventually her own great organization. The child rocked in the cradle was the same person who in middle age was rocked in the cradle by her husband and her servants. A sick-bed was no deterrent to her, and from it she arose to stage a triumph over unfriendly inquisitors. Practically unknown at sixty, the last twenty years of her incredible life witnessed her leadership giving birth to one of the great religious movements of modern times.

When some of her disciples grew too influential she cleverly adopted new rules for her Church Manual, which always were inflexible laws that compelled respect. When Mrs. Augusta Stetson loomed up too majestically on the horizon her wings were clipped by further legal enactments. Her own son, George Washington Glover, and her adopted son, Foster Eddy, were frequently the object of her rebuff. Her henchmen, Calvin A. Frye, Richard Kennedy, and Daniel H. Spofford cowed before her as slaves before their master. The By-Laws and the Church Manual were her guillotine, and any impediment, obstruction, or resistance that lay in the way of her personal advancement or threatened to function contrary to the good of her organization was forthwith decapitated. Josephine

¹³ S. Comstock, Aimee Semple McPherson, *Harpers*, Dec. 1927, p. 19.

¹⁴ New York Times, July 24, 1927, p. 21.

Curtis Woodbury felt the weight of Mrs. Eddy's influence and personal power. To the very inflexible discipline enforced by Mrs. Eddy this disciple was subjected. Mrs. Eddy's attitude was always "take it or leave it." Mrs. Woodbury chose to "leave it," and in consequence was excommunicated. The iron hand was unyielding.

According to the By-Laws of the church "Mary Baker Eddy was to go on decreeing, supervising her officials, reserving the right to make all new laws, forbidding any single change in church government without consultation with her, stipulating implicit obedience to her every spoken or written command. The officials of the church were all her creatures; it was her church alone. No matter how much her congregation ever contributed to it, they had no voice in its government. They owned nothing in it. They had no privilege except the right to come and sit in the pews while services were performed according to a ritual which Mary Baker Eddy had prescribed."¹⁵

A more arbitrary or despotic leadership can hardly be imagined anywhere than that which held forth in the Mormon kingdom under Joseph Smith, Jr. and Brigham Young. Smith was a child of his age, an age morbid, superstitious, and abounding in religious vagaries and quackeries. In such social soil, which may be productive of almost anything, he thrived. His ill-balanced mind was easily victimized by imagination and obsessions. "He was specially subject to anger, and trivial provocations would inflame him to the point of the most violent outbursts. His sense of his own importance and apparent power could brook no interference with his will, and any intrusion upon his real or imaginary rights would throw him into a rage."¹⁶ Indeed, toward the end of his chequered career it became very apparent that at certain times he was actually demented.

Brigham Young, known as the "Lion of the Lord," and who

¹⁵ E. F. Dakin, *Op. cit.*, pp. 510, 511.

¹⁶ J. H. Snowden, *The Truth About Mormonism*, p. 179.

both looked and acted well his part as such, assumed arbitrary power. Assuming and asserting regal airs, he became the monarch of all he surveyed. The millionaire magnet, enjoying the influence and power which were largely created by his own cyclonic ingenuity and cunning, stands out in bold relief against the destitute lad suffering every ill of poverty.

Whatever else may have been the merits or the demerits of the founders and leaders of the cults this must be granted them—they were superb organizers who had an eye single to business. Without any pretensions to wealth at the outset of their careers they soon evidenced that an adroit use of religion will serve admirably to fill their coffers with the currency of the realm. Mrs. Besant and Jiddu Krishnamurti the reputed new messiah, jointly owned a 900 acre estate near Santa Barbara, California. Myrtle and Charles Fillmore, subjected to direst penury early in their lives, knew how to organize religion so that it would overcome material handicaps, and by shrewd business insight they amassed great wealth and built a “colossal business organization”—all in the name of religion.

Mrs. Hutton is also an adept in the trafficking of religion. With her amazing ingenuity for organization her ventures have assured her personal gains and religion for the masses. She is a financier of no mean calibre. Worldly wealth and opulence are just as important to her as ideas and emotions. In this respect she is but the prolonged shadow of Mrs. Eddy.

Like the lowly Carpenter of Nazareth, Mrs. Eddy knew days when she had no place where to lay her head. At the outset of her career as a teaching practitioner she charged \$100 for a three weeks' course in faith-healing, but a business sense, unusually keen, compelled her to raise the fee to \$300 for this same course. Of course, the Almighty became implicated in her avariciousness by instructing her to take this step. “I shrank from asking it,” she said, “but was finally led by a strange providence, to accept this fee. God has since

shown me in multitudinous ways, the wisdom of this decision." ¹⁷

Furthermore, lest her pupils profit too greatly from their healing practice, a most lucrative profession, she exacted from each one a definite percentage of his income through this source. This "royalty" helped materially to transform her state of penury to one of affluence. "Adulation and wealth had been showered upon her with fantastic prodigality. Willing subjects had come in throngs to share her kingdom with her. Her every material ambition had been satisfied. The realm which she created revolved around her alone. She, the creator, was at once the centre and boundary of her creation. In her own microcosm she was God, and there was nothing more." ¹⁸

The major part of her estate, valued at approximately three million dollars, was left to her church. A few bequests were made to her grandchildren and to members of her personnel; a trust fund was set aside to educate Christian Science practitioners and provision made that the debt on the Second Church in New York City be liquidated. Nothing was left to charity.

Most of the founders and leaders of the cults were self-seeking, though efforts have always been made to conceal this fact or to explain it away. Their egoism, which frequently developed into an all-absorbing mania, is generally as obvious as the sun at noon-day. They labored under a sense of their own importance and frowned upon any effort or move which tended to undermine their position. Their self-love, egoistic righteousness, and intensity of self-confidence are often so consuming that they became wholly insensible to other more challenging interests. "Wanting in intellectual wholeness and sincerity, by reason of a natural flaw of mental structure, it is inevitable that they become morally insincere. They delude others for their own gain or glory, and to de-

¹⁷ M. B. Eddy, *Op. cit.*, p. 50.

¹⁸ E. F. Dakin, *Op. cit.*, p. 515.

lude others is a sure way to become by a steady process of self-collusion, self-deluded.”¹⁹

An unusual insight to the character of cult leaders is gained when we consider their married careers, and how so many of them either deserted or divorced their mates. Is this a mere coincidence among cult founders and leaders? Since they are readily given to exaggerations, victims of monomania, one is not surprised that their wrymindedness should lead them askew in their marriage experiences. Out of their own marriage experiences they gathered the timber with which they built their creeds and doctrines that relate to the institution of marriage.

Observe, for instance, Ann Lee protesting against matrimony and its impurity, nevertheless marrying a blacksmith with bibulous habits. From his physical embrace she shrank with repugnance and disgust. Having come to New York with her, he took sick but was nursed back to health through the sacrificial devotion of his wife. Upon recovery he fell in with an unwholesome crowd and turned against his wife with abuse. He insisted that she renounce her faith and come with him as a wife of the world. Upon her refusal to do this he deserted her, leaving her penniless.

At the age of seventeen the founder of American Theosophy was married to General Blavatsky, following a three-day courtship. Her biographer reports that she married him to spite her governess. Married in haste, she repented at leisure. After three unhappy months of wedded life she deserted him.

The leader of the Theosophists since 1907, the cultured and educated Mrs. Annie Besant, married an English vicar, whom she divorced after six years. Hereupon she renounced Christianity altogether. Two children were born of this union, but in spite of any happiness which they might have brought to her, she in her distraction, born of religious doubt and broken martial bliss, came to the very brink of suicide.

A rather turbulent course marked Mrs. Eddy's experiment

¹⁹ R. Harlan, *John Alexander Dowie*, p. 202.

with marriage. At the age of twenty-two Mary Baker married George Washington Glover, who was soon laid low with a fatal fever. A son bearing his name was born after his death. Ten years later, in 1853, she married again, this time to Daniel Patterson, who is described as a roving dentist and who could not live with her nor she with him. They separated, and in 1873 she took steps to divorce him. Whenever she had occasion to refer to this experiment she was always careful that he be placed in the most unfavorable light; and in an attempt to be absolved from all blame, she always sought to claim that the decree was rendered to her on the ground of adultery. Undaunted by her experiences she ventured for the third time upon the sea of matrimony, when four years later, in 1877, she married Asa Gilbert Eddy. The fifty-seven year old bride and the groom gave their ages as forty when the marriage license was issued. The marriage may be called strategic, since Eddy having become the centre of controversy among her pupils and followers, she "married the source of her trouble." He died of heart trouble in 1882, although she obdurately claimed that he was taken by arsenic poison mentally administered through malicious animal magnetism,—another one of her demonological obsessions.

A revivalist and foreign missionary by the name of Robert Semple won the hand of the founder of Angelus Temple. He died in China whither the young bridal couple had gone as missionaries. With her child, born after his death, his widow returned to America. After a few years she married a wholesale grocer by the name of McPherson who had promised her that, should she ever care to enter again upon religious work, "she should have her freedom." Chafing under the restraints of married life she again set out on a religious career, freed from the exactions of married life and home cares by the action of the divorce courts. For a third time in 1931 Mrs. McPherson ventured forth upon the sea of matrimony, this time marrying David L. Hutton while en route from the Orient. Incidentally, her third spouse, shortly after their mar-

riage figured in a \$200,000 breach of promise suit brought by one Myrtle St. Pierre.

But this singularly oblique strain or tendency in conjugal experiment is not limited to the fairer sex among the cult leaders. Charles T. Russell also had his story. His domestic life was by no means an earthly Paradise. Seventeen years of his life he spent in an experience which compelled him to write metaphorically that "many of the Lord's most faithful children live in a matrimonial furnace of affliction."²⁰ His wife separated from him in 1897. Something more than six years passed under this arrangement, and after an additional five years of litigation, during which time scandal attached the names of numerous women to his, his wife was granted a divorce by the courts.

The Kentucky broom-maker, Benjamin Purnell, was married in 1877, but deserted his wife and their daughter after two years. Three years later he acknowledged his marriage to a Mary Stollard. His first wife instituted divorce proceedings against him, although she never prosecuted them. Purnell was a bigamist. His consort remained faithful to him, even though his iniquitous and voluptuous dealings with numerous girls in his colony brought disdain and opprobrium upon his head. His misconduct finally resulted in criminal convictions in the courts of his state.

The classic offenders in multiple marriage, of course, are Joseph Smith, Jr. and Brigham Young. Repeated efforts have been made to shield Smith of polygynous practice, but evidence abounds and affidavits are on record that by 1843 he had entered into a least four marriage contracts. Throughout his life-time Smith was "sealed to twenty-seven wives." Brigham Young married six of Smith's widows. His name is linked by records of marriage with at least twenty-five wives who bore him forty-four children.

Purnell's bigamy was contrary to law, naturally, but the Mormon patriarchs, disregarding similar law, felt justified in

²⁰ Quoted by C. W. Ferguson, *Op. cit.*, p. 67.

their polygynous conduct because their church and their religion sanctioned such practices; and furthermore, because for them the laws of their religion are higher than the laws of the gentiles.

That leaders, untutored, domineering and self-seeking, many of whom successfully threw a halo about their own heads, even though their personal or private lives were not always above reproach, should nevertheless command respect, a following, and an unfaltering loyalty has always been an amazingly curious fact, and will ever remain one of the phenomena of religious leadership, an enigma that challenges not the sociologist so much as the psychologist. The veracity of such leaders has been attacked; their motives questioned or impugned; they have been ridiculed as shysters, designers, or impostors; and yet their following has remained loyal almost to a man.

Even though the Fox sisters confessed to fraud, the faithful followers of the cult of Spiritualism have not been detached. To the contrary, exposure of a fraud or of a moral lapse, seems to be the least effective method of combat, and tends rather to stimulate renewed allegiance and devotion. It may exert a deterrent influence in isolated cases, but evidence substantiates the fact that mass manias, intellectual fads, religious oddities and pious abnormalities are usually given new life by pathological aspects of leadership. The hypnotic spell which cult leaders are able to cast over deluded and obsessed individuals or groups, creating a certain mass consciousness and group solidarity is almost without precedent.

Many of Benjamin Purnell's followers testified on the witness-stand to their belief that he was God, perjuring themselves in defense of his gross misconduct. Three such witnesses in the court trial of this religious and sexual pervert declared that if their daughters admitted to them that he had ravaged them, they would doubt their word and still cling to Purnell. When he disappeared, having learned of the war-

rants that had been issued for his arrest, his followers likened the search for him by the officers of the law to that of Herod's search for the child Jesus.

Aimee McPherson Hutton goes to the seashore for a dip. She disappears mysteriously. She is believed to have been drowned. The members of her Temple go *en masse* to the beach where weeping and wailing is interspersed with hymn-singing and prayers. For thirty-two days twenty-four hour vigil is kept. Fishermen drag and divers search for her body. Angelus Temple offers a \$25,000 reward for her return, dead or alive. A memorial service attended by 20,000 people is held for her. Then an anonymous letter reaches her mother purported to have come from her kidnappers demanding a ransom of a half million dollars. Five weeks after her disappearance she returns under circumstances as mysterious as those attending her disappearance. Calumny, suspicion, investigation, evidence all unite to link her disappearance with clandestine conduct with her radio operator. Her trial in court brings out the most astounding facts and revelations, and still the throngs cling to her. In defense of their unshaken faith and allegiance, in the face of such pernicious revelations, her loyal followers suggest the rather pious but bland conviction that the Devil and his legions from the underworld had surreptitiously prearranged her kidnapping, because God's anointed are destined to suffer many things, not the least of which may be such an experience as this to which Mrs. Hutton was so shamelessly subjected. Furthermore, Mrs. Hutton is incriminated by the pastors of her staff who hail her into court upon the charge of misappropriation of funds. Mrs. Kennedy, her mother, causes her arrest, charging her with assault and battery, and still the multitudes remain loyal, and the "Standing-room Only" sign still stares the throngs in the face who seek admission to her Temple services. Such loyalty has not been witnessed in decades nor is it likely to be duplicated for a long time to come.

Mrs. Eddy and her followers constitute a closely related group. In spite of recrimination, jealousies, and wounded

pride, the organization moves on. Stories went the rounds that Mrs. Eddy appropriated her system of teaching and healing from Phineas P. Quimby; that she, contrary to her own teachings, took drugs, and that her healing powers were on the wane. But all this in no wise affected the loyalty of her following. Humorists poked their fun and ridicule at her; critics did their worst to undermine her influence, and yet they are legion who would give their right hand for her.

Conflict with the law which involved Joseph Smith, Jr. and his aides had no dampening effect upon the fealty of his followers. Smith was accused of having hired two of his followers to kill a certain farmer who had been none too complimentary in his criticism of the Mormon cult, but the charges were not substantiated. He was eventually tarred and feathered and finally assassinated by a lawless mob. If ever it was true that "the blood of the martyrs is the seed of the church," it was most certainly true of the Mormon cult in those days. Despite the circumstances attending Smith's tragic end, his death accentuated all the more the growth of a religion which has been called a cross between Roman Catholicism, Protestantism, and Mohammedanism.

The old Mormon doctrines are losing their grip on the younger generation, but family traditions, social and economic solidarity have not been impaired. The more critics rise up to break down this religious system, the more do the zealots contend for the ancient landmarks.

Failure of prophecies or the unaccomplished resurrection from the dead of such leaders who were believed to be immortal has not daunted in the least their benighted followers. Alleged but naive revelations and ingenious oracular pronouncements, which invest pseudo-prophets with power and authority are sufficient to guarantee a fidelity and group solidarity nowhere so discernable as among the cults.

The origin and development of the cults is astonishing, since we must remember that intelligence is not always of a high order, emotional reactions are often pathological or allegiance blind so far as the adherence of their members is

concerned. In the light of such facts credit for the evolution and growth of religious abnormalities and for the spell cast over the devout must be ascribed to the influence of leadership. The commonly accepted or prerequisite principles of leadership, obviously, are often cast to the four winds when eccentric, abnormal, or tangent groups or individuals are swayed or captivated by one of the greatest dynamics in the human heart—religion.

Chapter Fifteen

THE INDIVIDUALISM OF THE CULTS AND THE SOCIAL GOSPEL

"Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done on earth."—Jesus

The way of the prophet is hard. Of none has this been more true than of the seers of social religion. As they faced old frontiers and ancient barriers, religious standards of long standing, and strongly intrenched prejudices and taboos, they met a resistance which would not readily yield to the as yet largely untried experiments which a social gospel inspired. The paths which they were compelled to traverse were choked with the underbrush and tangle of social deceptions and inconsistencies of racial prejudices and snobbishness, of economic dishonesty and heartlessness, of material satisfaction and self-interest.

The social prophets' difficulties were not lessened, on the one hand, by the strongly individualistic plan of salvation which the Church promulgated, nor on the other hand, by a theology whose ethics cared little for social action, inasmuch as it was deemed to be sufficient to observe the "Thou shalt" and the "Thou shalt not" of the religious code.

In its efforts to evangelize the individual the Church overlooked the salvation of the world of individuals, felt no unusual responsibility for the transformation of customs and institutions, and failed to take sufficient notice of the trend of mass movements. Individual salvation, let it be said at the very outset, is an absolute and indispensable requisite, but it is not enough; not only man's soul but the whole of man in all his social relationships must be saved. The scheme of salvation must include the entire society of humans.

Individualism as a logical outgrowth of the democratic spirit and of religious toleration is largely responsible for the

decline in social responsibility. To seek personal salvation first and last is to arouse or to cater to selfish interests and to become socially obstructive. To expend time and effort in the salvation of individuals and at the same time close an eye to those conditions which are at work crushing out the lives of thousands and tens of thousands is to miss the heart of the gospel of Jesus. As Professor Dealey¹ rightly observes in this connection, "Attention given to individuals to the neglect of environment may result in the saving of the elect but in the damnation of the many."

If religious life has become in any way socially sterile and subjective it is because the extreme individualism of Protestantism has led to an absence of the sense of responsibility for the social order. If such individualistic "religion can harp only on the one string of personal salvation it will fall short of solving the problems of social life. A society of saved individuals is not a saved society until the individuals think together about the best way of living together,"² and work co-operatively under a definite sense of religious privilege and duty toward the realization of the Kingdom of God.

Philanthropy has ever been a praiseworthy phase of the individualistic gospel by which provision is made for a ministry of relief for the needy, the sick, and the suffering. But the end of such organized effort in the name of religion has been largely to prepare individual souls to meet their God. Where special care was exercised in behalf of the body, it has been only incidental to the salvation of the soul.

The current crisis theology of Germany, which has arrested the attention of a large sector of Christendom, is reverting to the time when the unseen world and the hereafter furnished the chief inspiration for most religious endeavors. "To anticipate the attainment of His (God's) righteous rule by reliance on eschatological miracle and meanwhile to condemn

¹ J. Q. Dealey, *Sociology—Its Development and Applications*, p. 385.

² E. S. Brightman, America's Newest Religion, *Christian Herald*, Dec. 7, 1929, p. 5.

all effort to work out human salvation by the best endeavor of which men are capable, is to reduce religion to an ethical anodyne,"³ and to ignore the obligations which religion, worthy of the name, imposes. "The other-worldly faith which regards the message of the gospel as applying to the individual's relation to a transcendental sphere alone and condemns every aspect of the present world, including culture, religious striving and every attempt at amelioration of social evils as the expression of a depraved and lost will"⁴ is decidedly backward looking.

The religious world has been a long time in catching the vision of the Nazarene who stressed the value and the sanctity of human relations as paramount to legalistic observances and ritualistic practices. His social gospel compels an emphasis upon mundane affairs where "the holy land to be redeemed is under the feet of the peasant and day-laborer."⁵ The stream flows on, to be sure, but its course is being altered. In notable contrast to a religion which fixed its eyes upon the unseen world it may now be said that in the crusade of modern religion "the earth is to be the battleground of the new ideal."⁶

The industrial revolution played an important part in presenting a battleline for the social gospel. Modern science, following in the wake of this radical change, has in no small measure inspired the change in front of individualistic religion to a united and co-operative campaign which looks to a fair solution of the problems of environment and of complex social situations. Heretofore we underestimated the interdependence of body and mind and the influence of physical conditions in the spiritual life. Unwholesome environment, poor housing, bad sanitation, and harmful working conditions contribute immeasurably to the disruption of the spiritual life. We are coming to appreciate that divine methods are

³ H. R. Niebuhr, *Social Sources of Denominationalism*, p. 278.

⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 275.

⁵ H. S. Nash, *Genesis of the Social Conscience*, p. 282.

⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 281.

not unscientific.

As a young reformer, who had cast his lot with the poor, the hungry, and the oppressed, Jesus faced a critical audience in the synagogue in his native village as he read the text from Isaiah:

"The Spirit of the Lord is upon me,
Because he hath anointed me to preach good tidings to the poor :
He hath sent me to proclaim release to the captives,
And recovering of sight to the blind,
To set at liberty them that are bruised,
To proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord."

(Luke 4:18, 19)

These words announced his social program, and lest there be some misunderstanding he added, "Today hath this scripture been fulfilled in your ears." (Luke 4:21) His words so poignantly expressive of an absolute indifference to the vested rights and interests of his hearers caused his already incensed audience to yield to a mob spirit which almost cost him his life. This young preacher proposed a democracy of love or perfect social order, which was not dependent upon any mechanism of society, but which centered in the human heart. Only through service which looks to the abolition of poverty, ignorance, ill-will, and which is sufficient to solve the harassing problems of those who are ruthlessly crushed by rampant social ills can such a brotherhood of man be established. To this noble and holy experiment Jesus dedicated himself and challenged his hearers to take up the cross and follow him.

Despite the imminence of his own martyrdom Jesus dared to speak repeatedly and with no uncertain emphasis against the individualistic religion of his day as he denounced those who "tithe mint and anise and cummin" but leave "*undone* the weightier matters of the law, justice, and mercy, and faith," who "cleanse the outside of the cup and of the platter but within they are full of extortion and excess," and who "build the sepulchres of the prophets, and garnish the tombs

of the righteous," but persecute and slay the prophets of their own day. (Matt. 23:23, 25, 29.)

The supreme achievement of Jesus, then, lay in the creation of a spiritual kingdom which should surpass the noblest dreams of Hebrew prophecy. His kingdom was to be dominated by a spirit of brotherhood, which under God as a common Father should transform and transfigure society. Its citizens were those who were prepared to accept this principle with all of its implications. Social relations in this kingdom were to be immune to the molding influences of legal forms, doctrinal tenets, ritualistic and perfunctory services. The Kingdom of God was not a scholar's hazy concept, but "a social hope on fire with religion,"⁷—the religion of a social prophet who made its accomplishment the work of his life and the work of his death.

It is a singular thing that the modern Church has not yet caught fire with a social passion since the gospel of Jesus is largely responsible for most of our social problems. The spirit of brotherhood which germinated in this gospel has dealt crushing blows to these problems, and yet the Church has been altogether too reluctant to make their ultimate solution co-extensive with soul salvation. The eternal weal of the soul is hardly paramount to the elimination of the determinative or contributory influences which so largely account for man's undoing. The slum, poverty, slavery, prostitution, delinquency, and dependency are scarcely less iniquitous than covetousness, lust, selfishness, greed, and ill-will. The *summum bonum* of the soul is not found in a detachment from this world, which all too soon leads to the point of inertia, but in an expansion of horizon and a broadening of sympathies that create social attitudes worthy of the religion of Jesus. "Whosoever would save his life shall lose it." (Matt. 16:25)

The social function of the Church, then, must ever be centered in a program which brings God into human relationships

⁷ W. Rauschenbusch, *Christianizing the Social Order*, p. 52.

and establishes a laboratory in which individual Christians may work out their own salvation and that of society. The Church which commits itself to such social action quite naturally exposes itself to frequent and unwarranted criticism because invested interests have always accused the religious forces of stepping in where they have no right and of challenging prerogatives which are not their own. The Church is urged to see to its own business and to cease activity in public affairs. Such adverse criticism has often persuaded self-centered and other-worldly minded individuals and groups to hold themselves aloof from the struggling masses and their pressing problems.

The cults do not share this criticism with the historic churches. Of them it can not be said that they "mix in politics." They have not been interested in definite social action as it relates itself to industrial problems, international affairs, nor in matters of public health. Many of their members have "left the church and all civic and social problems because of a dominant notion of religious superiority."⁸ In this respect, at least, their religion shows woeful inadequacy.

Strongly individualistic they experience "a conflict of motives; there is unhappiness and the impulse to escape by a retreat into the inner life."⁹ This is especially true of such contemplative cults as New Thought, Theosophy, and Baháism whose ideals are in radical opposition to the interests of our modern world. As in many mystics so is there also discoverable in them an effort to escape "from the difficulties of life into a negative indifference characterized by notions of superiority and the absence of consciousness of social responsibility."¹⁰

Therefore one looks in vain to the cults for a definite program which might stimulate or effect social progress. Their indifference to the social well-being of their neighbors is off-

⁸ E. S. Conklin, *The Psychology of Religious Adjustment*, p. 219.

⁹ *Ibid.*, pp. 220, 221.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 221.

set by a spirit of rivalry and an unethical ambition to grow at the expense of other religious groups, which, incidentally, are not unfamiliar earmarks of denominationalism. Their own peculiar interpretations of religion add little to its potency as a super-socializing spiritual dynamic which it inherently is. There is evidence, however, that the various cults will look after their own household, but this is only another and intensified evil aspect of the spirit of denominational rivalry.

The Christian Scientists through their Benevolent Societies have established several sanatoriums which are designated as charitable institutions. One of these, which involves an investment of four million dollars, is situated at Arden Wood, on the edge of San Francisco. Two others, even more pretentious than this one, are located at Chestnut Hill, Mass., and at Concord, N. H. As may well be expected, these sanatoriums are open only to followers of Mary Baker Eddy. Likewise their wartime activities at home and abroad were inaugurated solely in the interest of their own constituency.

Christian Scientists are not interested in public health except it be furthered by their exclusive methods. As individuals Christian Scientists may be liberal supporters of various philanthropies and social agencies, but as a church they sense no social responsibility whatever, if we may judge by their corporate conduct in this direction. As an organized body they are not behind any great benevolences or philanthropies; they are not known to take up the cudgels against intrenched social sins, and send no missionaries to non-Christian lands to win unbelievers to the cause of Christ. They give no evidence whatever that they consider themselves their brothers' keepers, save as they may win them to their own fold. "In *Science and Health* Mrs. Eddy shows an undisguised hardness toward the poor. And those who have Christian Science friends must have been shocked many a time by their careful avoidance of places where anything painful might be met,

and their indifference to the common troubles of other people." ¹¹

They have no program for the reprobates and the moral derelicts, deep in sin and vice. Such do not afford a fruitful field for the propagation of their doctrines and practices. "Christian Science may promise and does give a kind of comfort, but it is an ignoble kind. It finds its own comfort by forgetting the discomfort of others. It is largely oblivious of the suffering of the world because it does not believe in the reality of any suffering and thinks that such delusion is a personal fault. It has no social gospel and no form of social service. It is terribly significant and a damning indictment of Christian Science that it has no hospitals and general philanthropies because it does not believe in them." ¹²

The very philosophy of Christian Science precludes any support of charity since its contention is that "needy humanity would not need charity if it subscribed to Christian Science, and thereby used Mrs. Eddy's system of attaining well-being." ¹³ In a statement furnished by the Christian Science Board of Directors ¹⁴ we read that "all of the activities of the Christian Science denomination are intended to promote spiritualization of thought," but where do we find any interest in the consideration of the evil effects of thought that has not been "spiritualized," a problem that cannot be denied or set aside as nebulous or non-existing?

The Christian Science Parent Church, or the Church of the Transforming Covenant as it is sometimes called, organized by virtue of the rediscovery of Christian Science by Mrs. Annie C. Bill specifies that "no sanatoriums, hospitals, homes for the aged, or similar institutions for Christian Science treatment of physical diseases shall be established by members of this church," and furthermore that "true mental heal-

¹¹ J. D. Burrell, *A New Appraisal of Christian Science*, pp. 65, 66.

¹² J. H. Snowden, *The Truth About Christian Science*, p. 263.

¹³ E. F. Dakin, *Mrs. Eddy*, Footnote, p. 459.

¹⁴ *U. S. Census of Religious Bodies, 1926*, Church of Christ, Scientist, No. 60, p. 13.

ing demands that discordant physical conditions shall be treated individually and not collectively.”¹⁵

As Dr. Atkins points out¹⁶ “Christian Science is in line with a distinct contemporaneous demand to demonstrate God’s love in about the terms of Jacob’s vow at Bethel.” (Gen. 28: 20, 21.) But this is not the religion, it is suggested, of the Sermon on the Mount.

The Mennonites are a kindly-minded group of religious zealots, and hospitality is one of their outstanding characteristics. During the 1930 economic depression prosperous Amish farmers of Holmes County in Ohio, having heard of the suffering of their brethren due to unemployment, came to Cleveland with the choicest produce of their farms, and as a religious duty arranged to feed 200 of their starving unemployed brethren. But there is little evidence of any extensive organized effort on the part of these people to practice or support a social program or a social gospel which reaches out beyond their own religious groups or constituencies.

In a circular announcing a radio broadcast of an address by Judge Rutherford on Sunday, April 27, 1930, the Russelites had this to say: “Out from under the cloak of mysticism, away from the fog of clerical stupidity and the rubbish of creeds and religious fanaticism, through Judge Rutherford’s books, the Bible arises to take its unimpeachable, its indisputable place as the Word of Almighty God, the very fountain of reason and logic and light.” But the central theme of the Millennial Dawnists’ Bible interpretation is chiliastic and cataclysmic. People believing in the imminence of the end of the world and the overthrow of all human government can scarcely be expected to grow over enthusiastic about the problems of a machine age, the temptations of the slums or the oppression of “the submerged tenth.” They can not become ardently interested in the social implications of Jesus’ gospel if for them major emphasis is to be laid upon final things and the end that is about to be accomplished.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, The Christian Science Parent Church, No. 63, p. 8.

¹⁶ G. G. Atkins, *Modern Religious Cults and Movements*, p. 204.

Like the followers of Pastor Russell, the Pentecostalists believe whole-heartedly that the final consummation of the Kingdom of God is imminent, which belief inspires in them a zealous preparation for the coming of the Lord. The activities of this group include missionary work among many nations in an effort to arouse both believers and unbelievers to a similar conviction. With their eyes steadfastly fixed upon the portents in the skies it does not seem unreasonable that they should fail to observe the unmistakable signs which our work-a-day world with its complex social order presents and which invite or encourage enterprising endeavor that looks toward human betterment and social progress.

The strained emotionalism, the intolerance, and the tendency toward undue detachment or other-worldliness of the Buchmanites explains to a considerable extent their indifference to the social gospel. Quiet and retirement are emphasized by them, and mysticism is exalted as an inward resurgence which takes the form of "hunches." The strength of Buchmanism is its concept of God as the primal fact of the universe, a belief that inspires a fearless facing of realities and an unstinted dedication and surrender of life to the Eternal Will. But in its very strength inheres also its weakness. It breeds an individualism that may become unwholesomely subjective and intropsective, narrow, selfish, and egoistic. Such souls grow oblivious to the basic duties which salvation imposes, as they seek personal comfort and assurance. "A man is not merely saved *out* from an evil society—the world; he is to be saved *into* a good society—the kingdom of God."¹⁷ It has become a commonplace that "the saved life must function socially or be lost."

The Dowieites had their own charitable institutions, such as the Home For Erring Women in Zion City. They manifested a certain civic pride in their city that bore fruit in social action, but the active interest of these religionists in the social aspects of community life was an unknown quantity beyond their own city limits. In fact, Dowie himself gave

¹⁷ Shailer Mathews, *The Social Gospel*, p. 18.

evidence of this in his wanton disinterestedness in the more extensive ramifications of social well-being by promulgating his anti-medical views with almost fanatical zeal. Every book against medicine that he could lay his hands on he added to his library and studied it diligently for such material as would bolster up his tirade against the medical profession. Obviously then, every attempt to enhance public health programs within the confines of their own city was met with unmistakable hostility. Likewise, a bland indifference marked their attitude toward civic righteousness and social regeneration beyond their own religious kindred.

The Mormons maintain several very splendid hospitals in Salt Lake City. They have a Relief Society composed of women of the church which works under the supervision of the priesthood. This benevolent organization, composed of 1528 societies with over 61,000 members and a disbursement of \$287,030 in 1926, practically independent in its own sphere of munificence, is limited, however, largely to the members of the Mormon church, or used in proselyting efforts. Sewing-bees for the benefit of the poor are sponsored by this society, and a granary is stored with wheat against the predicted famines which are to attend the "last days." But whatever social service the Mormons engage in, the followers of Smith seem to be the sole beneficiaries.

Social and economic privileges and advantages are emphasized by the Mormons as much, if not more than the religious element of their faith. And for this reason the Gentiles find it expedient to join the cult, which they do, much as they join a service club or a non-religious fraternity.

Unity is essentially selfish when viewed from the social service point of view. Economic and spiritual benefits are emphasized, but for the individual only. So also Spiritualism, notwithstanding its stand against war and capital punishment. To the credulous adherents of Spiritualism the all-important thing is to establish contact with the unseen world and the departed, while little or no concern whatever is felt for any constructive contacts which their religion might

make with the seen world and the living but struggling masses. A social gospel sinks into insignificance as the spirit-world looms up with its inhabitants more concerned about lost jewelry, hidden mysteries, and the fate of spinsters, if credence is to be ascribed to the alleged messages that are transmitted by way of deluded mediums and by whose own delusions, crafty devices, and knavery still others are deluded.

The Federal Council of the Churches of Christ in America, which is supported by thirty or more of the religious denominations of our country, and which carries on an extensive social program largely through its Commissions on International Justice and Goodwill, on Church and Race Relations, Christian Education and Social Service, does not receive the slightest support from any of the cults or sects. They do not co-operate with any local Council or Federation of Churches, apparently having no interest in a corporate way in community problems or social service through which religion may not only play an important role, but even assume leadership and afford inspiration and incentive.

While the churches, increasingly influenced by a social passion for erring and suffering humanity, are endeavoring more and more to make their faith articulate through a helpful and constructive service to the masses, the recusant and strongly individualistic cults sense no responsibility whatever to integrate themselves with the life of their specific communities or the world at large. The problems of social hygiene and prohibition, crime and delinquency, industrial and family welfare, social legislation and public health have no strong appeal for the cults. Their interests lie in other directions. The spiritual resources to which they always lay a special, even exclusive claim, are hemmed in by a narrow, selfish, and individualistic complacency. One engages in a vain search among the cults for any social pronouncements or declarations of purpose by way of a practical application of a social gospel to the needs of humanity. They are always deeply in earnest about their own particular brand of religion, content

themselves with personal salvation, and do little to make this old world a better place in which to live.

With respect to responsibility for the existing social order the cults may be described as belated travelers in the twentieth century. To believe, as many cultists do, that the Church and religion have nothing to do with social morality because there can be no social sin that is not also individual sin is to possess a myopic, selfish and limited faith. "Society at large is not greatly endangered by the sneak thief, the highway robber, or by one who shoots his victim for pelf. It is threatened, however, at its very foundations by those who profit by the conditions they are able to organize for gain, without regard to the effect in the hopes and lives of hundreds and thousands of their fellow-men. For the Church to be silent under such conditions is to deny her Lord and to prove herself unworthy to continue as the light bearer of the ages."¹⁸ Here the cults are arch-offenders. They may seek to secure divine favor or material prosperity, to avoid calamity and the cross, but "any view of life that limits morals to the simple lines of individual conduct is not only inadequate; it is likely to become immoral in its practical results in the presence of a world of complex social relationships."¹⁹

Many of the cultists as individuals are philanthropically, and even socially minded, but this state of mind has not been created by their newly adopted theological teachings. If such a state of mind has been created at all by a sense of Christian duty, it is because most of the cultists originally came out of the historic Christian churches. Such personal attitudes are a heritage of a previous or early religious training. Their newly acquired religion is usually so laden with trivial non-essentials that unless their religious background is sufficient **they are soon rendered actionless and obsolescence threatens them.**

¹⁸ J. W. Shackford, *The Program of the Christian Religion*, p. 99.

¹⁹ *Ibid*, p. 94.

Every student of Christian sociology, giving thought to Jesus' program will readily discover that one of his requirements for discipleship was service—service in every situation in which the Kingdom should be accomplished. Religious individualism in which the service element is wholly lacking is usually tinged with self-seeking as it avoids the world and its pressing problems. True social development, let it be said in all fairness, is largely enhanced by individualism, but it is an individualism different from that displayed by the cults. It is an individualism which is not swayed by crowds and classes, fads, foibles, nor fancies. It moves in a world of thought and guides toward lofty ends. Such individualism understands and approves the social order, becomes enthusiastic for its development, and contributes by thought and deed to social progress. The individualism of the cults is of another variety.

Out of a world of turmoil and unrest stability must eventually come. Heroic leadership and co-operative service alone can meet the challenge and satisfy the need. The social conscience and collective action alone can usher in the better day,—but the cults in the main, have not yet sensed this responsibility nor availed themselves of their fullest opportunities. Just as long as the cults continue in their selfish search for the *summum bonum* of their own souls and isolate themselves from the main currents of life, so long the major burdens of society must be borne by those who have social vision.

Chapter Sixteen

AN APPRAISAL

"Thou art weighed in the balances, and art found wanting."

—Daniel.

With possibly two or three outstanding exceptions the individual religious cults of America are numerically inconspicuous. But since there are approximately two hundred and fifty or more species of such minor and more fantastic religious extravagances in this country it will be conceded that they form a substantial part of the social fabric, and that in the aggregate they must exert a conditioning influence of no mean proportion upon society. Thus they must share with factious, secular social groups part responsibility for subjecting the social order to a strain that might issue in disruption were it not for the perpetual vigilance on the part of those whose interests lie in the direction of an adjusted world with amicable human relationships.

That America has become the "paradise of heterodoxy" need not be wondered at when we remember how really unique this country is in the way that it does things. Here is found a restless activity, often feverish, and a ceaseless clamor for the strangely new, something different, something thrilling. Tired of one enthusiasm we rush headlong to another fad, and wearying of that, we set out in search of new fancies. We are ever aloft the watchtowers scanning the horizon for new fields to conquer and new triumphs to carry away. Little wonder that in such a psychological atmosphere religion becomes disorganized and complacent, and that a veritable spawn of fantastic religious cults is given birth whose prophets and leaders are quick to take their cue from the spirit of their age and environment.

These counterfeit prophets and reputed heralds of a new

hope are quite generally possessed of a distorted intellect, plus a forceful or magnetic personality. Unlike the prodding prophets of old who spent their days in privation and lenity, these modern but erratic prophets live in the midst of luxurious pomp and kingly splendor, which a benighted but enthusiastic constituency cheerfully and uncomplainingly provides. What these leaders offer is very often nothing more than an intellectual fad dressed up in religion, or a plausible panacea, an idea that works, thinly veneered with a current scientific terminology. This is always wonderfully appealing to such as are either easily swayed and carried away by the *Zeitgeist*, or who are in a sensitive and receptive mood because of doubts, disappointments or personal grievances. All this further attests the truthfulness of the old adage that *populus vult decipi*. A great deal of time does not elapse before the unsuspecting and myopic converts to the new doctrines are plundered or exploited by a scheming or deluded leadership that has actually become a foe to humanity.

In evaluating the American religious cults we shall observe first that *as religious abnormalities they involve an expenditure of socio-religious energy which is unproductive of an adequate return in social values.*

Religious oddity and obscurantism are nowhere more apparent than among the members of these cults, whether it be in manner of dress, personal appearance, practice, beliefs, or culture. To believe some of the strange tenets as taught by their leaders or as laid down in their sacred books is already an indictment of their intelligence. Such bizarre philosophies and utopian schemes as may be found among these religious zealots serve only to testify further to a decided deficiency in mentality and emotional control. It is no more foolish to try to stay the onward march of science, or to labor for its return to the magic arts than it is to countenance the atavistic tendencies which the cults manifest. The origin of religion, we are told, is found in superstition and magic, with the priest and the physician performing a dual office in the person of the medicine man. But whereas true religion has

long since laid aside its pagan cloaks, many of the cults insistently continue their adherence in diverse respects to ancestral heritages, some of which are traceable to the medicine man and the magician. Thus the cults have come to be described, and rightly so, as an *Ueberbleibsel*, a fragment hanging on.

Some of the cults, for instance, stalk forth as a protest against materialism—no unworthy ambition, we are ready to admit. More correctly, however, ought they be delineated as a protest against all that is finest and best in modern life, for the battle against materialism is being waged by such scientists as Marconi, Noguchi, Pupin and others. Even to call Mary Baker Eddy a pseudo-scientist is to flatter her undeservedly.

Mrs. Eddy's *Science and Health*, an illustrious jargon of religious nonsense, pseudo-science, and philosophical inconsistencies, and the *Book of Mormon*, the greatest fraud ever perpetrated upon this believing world, as well as the innumerable alleged visions, trances and revelations vouchsafed to morbid minds and paranoics, have supported the farrago of irreligion as little else. The pity is that these insults to human intelligence have encouraged and fostered the many strange and indefensible infatuations which parade among us as pure and undefiled religion.

The cults are pathological in many respects as may well be gathered from the excesses to which they so often are given over. Hysteria and fanaticism are a wreckless spending of strength and energy that leave nothing but broken bodies, jaded spirits, and dwarfed intellects with no one deriving any lasting benefit whatever therefrom. A vast pressure of steam which should be turning the wheels of social progress is deliberately let off, with fuel wasted and resources squandered.

Those who are mentally weak by nature or are hereditarily inclined toward a neurosis or psychosis, or who are possessed of unstable emotions do ill to trifle with a séance and thus transfer their efforts, thoughts, and resources from a world

Author
Too
carried
away

of conflict to another realm which is beyond the need of the benefits that such social or religious energies may be able to produce. Abandon to such procedure is always deadening to human capacity.

One of the most amazing things that arrests our attention is the fact that the cults number among their constituency so many apparently intelligent and otherwise progressive spirits. It is more than likely, however, that not infrequently even the reputed enlightenment of these adherents is offset by some peculiar psychological deficiency or emotional complex.

A preventive type of religion which attempts to keep men from sinking into besmirching mire and infamy, and from wasting their gifts is more divine than the kind demonstrated by the cults which bask in the sunshine of self-sufficiency and personal assurance. In this wise the cults are spending themselves and whatever resources they can command while society, steeped in harassing and vexing problems, goes limping by, or continues dwelling in the ever-lengthening shadows of maladjustment and ill-will.

The integral purpose of the cults may be a host of things, but most certainly even at their very best they do not furnish any too complimentary chapters to the "continuous biography of Jesus," as they almost totally ignore social structures, functions, duties, and movements. Negative policies, preoccupation with avoidance, elimination, and renunciation are not executed without a great expenditure of personal and social energy, and are productive of little that makes for permanent happiness, progress, and success. Their spiritual value in many respects is largely negative. Though the cultists may in a sense be humanitarian, a state in itself laudable enough, they reflect but imperfectly, even at their very best, the idealism of the Nazarene, who in going about doing good always permitted his religious nature to issue forth in abiding social values.

Secondly, *the resultant effect of the socio-religious forces as exerted by the cults is maladjustment in the social process.*

One idea will often create a schism, but is never quite enough to produce an enduring church. The modicum of truth that a separatistic group may tenaciously adhere to may often explain the *raison d'être* but it will not guarantee longevity. The corollary of this obviously is that the more of truth any religious organization possesses the longer it will prevail or survive. In a real sense all parts of a divided Christendom are schismatic. No single group or organization possesses all the truth nor the entire spirit of Jesus. But nowhere, except among the cults, do we find a spirit so divisive that it results in duplication of effort, overlapping, waste, and personal exploitation, nor one so completely out of harmony with the efficiency and practicality of the present age.

Amidst the confusion of tongues and the boisterous and ambitious claims of deluded cultists it is but natural that there should be a great exodus from the churches and a depletion of Christian forces. When confessing Christians are so hopelessly at variance with one another, and so tainted with misunderstanding and suspicion, it is not at all surprising that the challenge and the appeal of religion to extraneous or non-religious individuals and groups are largely nil. The exodus to the cults is too often but one step removed from irreligion and atheism out of which may issue one of the most serious of religious maladjustments, since no one is competent to gauge its potencies or estimate its consequences.

The wanton disregard for some of our most treasured institutions and the lack of attention to social improvement has often led to conflict and maladjustment. The hostile or indifferent attitude of the cults for these things may be readily understood since there is an unquestioned sincerity and conviction among them as to the truthfulness of their particular faith—hence the conviction that all other faith is in error. Such sincerity commands respect and some measure of pity. But even creedal differences ought not be insurmountable nor deterrent to united or co-operative action in community or human welfare programs. The unmolested

practice of one's religious faith is a constitutional guarantee, but when such liberty issues in license or excess, or becomes a public menace, its curtailment is justified. It is easy to see how out of all this, prejudice and conflict, may emerge. Prejudice, a positive evidence of emotional deficiency, inevitably results in misunderstanding and strife, and all conflict, unless it leaves life richer than before, is wasteful, disruptive, and prodigal. The sum total is always maladjustment.

One of the dark chapters of American history deals with the Mormon menace in the West at a time when an *imperium in imperio* was more than an idle dream. When elections are swayed at the direction of an absolute and autocratic priesthood, when laws are flouted, when social institutions are undermined, and when traditions are violated, an evil influence which ought to be resisted to the utmost has come upon the scene. Liberty of conscience and freedom of ballot, both sacred to Americans, were violated when, for example, in 1904 in Zion City, every vote had to be cast for the Republican presidential candidate. Even a foreign government as that in India found it necessary to restrain Mrs. Besant for inciting political intrigue. Such problematic behavior is most certainly not consistent with purposive progress in the social process.

It is striking to find such unusual emphasis placed upon sex by so many of the cults. Are they in this respect children of their age? Sex relationships and sex education can no longer be taboo in an enlightened and progressive age, but again here we observe how liberty may very often lead to excess. Some of the cults have been grave offenders in this respect. It is most unfortunate that some of the cults have come to think that sex relationships have no social responsibilities. It is a grievous mistake to hold as the Doukhobors do that "a marriage contract concerns no one but the two parties interested." Society as a whole is vitally concerned about marriage since it is a fundamental institution and of inestimable importance for the whole human race. Society's protest is justifiable and pardonable.

Problematic, just because such doctrines often lead to maladjustment, are the anti-marriage Shakers, the celibate House of David, the wife-communists of Oneida, the polygynous Mormons, the Spiritualists with their doctrines of affinities, and the Christian Scientists with their nebulous doctrines on sex and marriage. The Shakers and the House of David shun family responsibilities, which may be their privilege, to be sure, and no one can bid them stay,—but since the family is the primary group or unit of society, the sociologist will have some pertinent questions to ask them.

Illness always results in maladjustment. The faith and mind-healing cults have some principles which are commendable, but not infrequently their abuse results in the tragic undoing of what science and common sense have wrought. As in matters of faith, so in those of health, the method of cure is an individual prerogative, but when the larger whole, a family or a community are needlessly exposed to disease, plague, and pestilence as the result of the unwise exercise of that right, such cult practices become a curse, despite all their otherwise commendable qualities. The social significance of such invidious procedure and practice is apparent to everyone. Public health is a most important social issue and to ignore it, even at the behest of specific religious doctrines, is to indict their advocates as avowed enemies of society.

Harmony, peace, and progress constitute a most natural desire of all men. To act in a way that is contrary to this innate desire, even in the name of a deity, is either to reflect unfavorably upon that god or to convict the practitioner of abject ignorance, perverse obstinence, or woeful deficiency of mind and emotion.

Thirdly, *religious cults are deficient in social responsibility, therefore delinquent in advancing a program which has social progress as its goal.*

Much of the progress in society so far as the cults' contribution is concerned is ecabatic, not to be discouraged nor underrated, of course. But progressive religion must of necessity be preponderately purposive or telic and cannot be

content with an incidental or a merely haphazard development along the way. In all great movements of history religion has always been a great driving force. Unfortunately, in the midst of the social order for which we ourselves are largely responsible, this dynamic not infrequently spends itself in wrong directions, contending for unessentials, as laudable as these may sometimes appear to be. The world looks to the future and find its visions there, to be sure, but this old, prosaic, and work-a-day world, so intricately enmeshed in anti-social enthusiasms, grows impatient with a religion determined merely upon seeing visions and dreaming dreams. We cannot hope to take our lead from the Spiritualists who find humanity more fascinating when dead, nor from the Mormons whose activities are taken up so largely by services for the dead to the neglect of the living. So religion is a passion often misplaced, as important matters are supplanted by those less significant.

Hopes for a cataclysmic adjustment of this world's ills is a hazy hope at best. The Russellites would be able to render a more profitable stewardship if they gave as much time to a study of human needs as they do to an interpretation of the signs of the times and of the skies. The speaking in tongues to which some turbulent sects are given is not the language which a world of men long to hear as they groan under social injustice, exploitation, and want. People out of work and without hope, caught in the maelstrom of human wreckage, know how to appreciate the Samaritan's oil and wine, for these assuage the pain of their bleeding wounds. Yet they are aware that the Samaritan's service could be made unnecessary by eliminating from the countryside the robbers with which it is infested. It is noble to salvage, but it is nobler to prevent.

Playgrounds, day nurseries, civic centers, and educational facilities allay the anxiety resting upon the Samaritan's soul. The malnourished mentality of impetuous modern prophets prevents their seeing or appreciating the great problems of a complex society and seems to convince them that an eccentric

or unique doctrine is the bread that can feed the masses. This is in precise keeping with the individualistic policies of the cults. The social cost of sin is as gigantic as individual sin, and social salvation is not one whit less important than a safe and certain individual destiny. To make a god out of individualism, as is so frequently done, is to evade ultimate responsibility and to walk in the path that the priest and the Levite trod, both of whom were otherwise undoubtedly respectable and pious men. The responsibility rests with those who have the light. But to conserve that light by placing it under the bushel of individualism is to revel selfishly in the benefits that society has wrought out of a desperate struggle against those baser elements and forces that spend themselves in the undoing and enervating of men.

The Buchmanites are right: "You can only give what you have," but like most of the cultists they are quiescent on social questions. The best way to stay saved is to save others, yet others may not find it so easy to stay saved unless the environment, the source of temptation be changed as well as the heart. Individuals must of necessity be saved first, but that salvation is only partial if it does not fire a man with enthusiasm to work and to live vicariously. With the cults the Kingdom of God begins in the individual heart, and rightly so. But contrary to the very genius of this kingdom, it always remains there. The arena of its conflicts is in the world more so than in the heart. Subjective ideals and the sentimental and introspective type of their piety have led the cults to live and to practice their religion in isolation and seclusion, and to seek spiritual power mainly as an end in itself. Social efficiency, however, can only grow out of a higher and ever expanding social consciousness. "Where there is no vision the people perish." (Prov. 29:18)

Even the larger and more wealthy cults show little concern about serviceable equipment and appointments in their building plans. Obsolescence and depletion of equipment is the bane of any forward-moving enterprise. Business realizes this, but not the cults. Content with a snugly warm and quiet

meeting-place, their adherents easily develop a complacency and a disinterestedness in social matters that lull the conscience to sleep—a sleep with no haunting dreams to disturb or to arouse to action and to make religion the dynamic and the well-spring of social action.

Finally, *religious cults are the lengthened shadows of denominationalism. As such they either augment or intensify the forces which militate against Christian unity and undermine Christianity as the super-socializing, spiritualizing dynamic.*

The cult principle manifestly is opposed to the universal type of religion. In addition to being strongly divisive and sectarian the lurid religious groups are imbued with a passionate zeal to proselyte, so that instead of making the world their field, they prefer to make the organized Christian churches their hunting-ground, and to steal sheep rather than feed them. Taking advantage of the religious background created by the churches the cults find it a relatively easy matter to win new converts to their particular brand, while the more difficult task of winning the irreligious and unconverted is left to the historic and traditional churches. In this they are obviously cultists first and religionists thereafter.

It is easy to understand how the pharisaical attitude of the cults and their claim to special divine favor more than taxes the charity and the patience of the larger historic groups. The test of Christian discipleship is stern and unrelenting, the ideals high, and accommodation to personal likes and dislikes inconsistent with the spirit of true religion. Some of the cults undermine Christian principles, shatter Christian ideals, and enfeeble human efforts as they offer the spiritually anaemic a flowery bed of ease on which they may be carried to heaven. Disintegration is inevitable.

Over-organization and disorganization are two of Protestantism's besetting sins. That bigotry and a sectarian spirit are sometimes found in many of the larger historical bodies few will deny—but two evils do not make one right. These shortcomings are found in aggravated measure among the

cults and work contrary to the peace and unity which ought to be central in Christian life. Not that organic union is the solution to all church problems, but a divided Christendom, intensified by cult principles most certainly involves a needless expenditure of resources, an overlapping, a debilitation of energy, and an amazing inefficiency in practicable Christianity. A divisive spirit becomes a handicap in spite of Utopian schemes which may pretend, after a fashion, to be an effort at telic progress.

But fortunately people are usually better than their professions. Most men are humane even though they are little interested in specific intellectual, religious, or social problems. And so we do wisely, if in our estimate of the social significance of the cults we give credit where credit is due. Wherever we find shadows we may reasonably expect to find some light. Not everything that the cults are or offer is equally deserving of unmitigated and harsh condemnation; there is good in all of them.

The cults are useful as a protest in that they call attention to some neglected aspects of the truth. The materialistic philosophies, mechanistic theories, and defense complexes of many lives, as well as some of the deeper mysteries of life leave many souls still crying for bread. The selfish indifference and smug complacency into which religion often drifts clearly marks out the battle-line and the foe against which the cults would hurl their thunderbolts. The unreasonableness and excess to which they so readily lend themselves need not overshadow altogether whatever there is constructive and helpful in their respective systems.

Our staid orthodoxy is often given a decided jolt, not always welcome, we are ready to admit, but, nevertheless, wholesome and sometimes quite necessary. Orthodoxy, as well as heterodoxy, begets extremes and whatever mutual check may be offered should always be regarded as a distinct and profitable service. By mere contrast with the excesses and the foolishness of some of the cults a keener appreciation

for the heritage which is ours is inspired. When historic churches become decadent or moribund the presence and activity of the cults may startle them in their hapless plight and stimulate in them an activity that may be both invigorating and encouraging.

Both the good and the evil influences which the various cults may weave into the social fabric of American life are accentuated by the extreme loyalty which is almost universal among them. To discover Mormons going from coast to coast and across the seas on purely missionary endeavors in absolute obedience to the behest of the priesthood, and personally assuming all financial obligations for a whole year as their contribution to their church and religion is to shame the members of the orthodox churches. Such loyalty and obedience is at once challenging and commanding.

The faith-healing cults have also got hold of a great truth when they affirm that the best way to heal the body is through the mind, and that his is not the monopoly to heal who holds a medical degree. They restore the realization of the imminency of God and counteract the belief that he is not vitally concerned about his creatures.

While the Oriental cults at present exert a negligible influence upon Western civilization, it must be conceded that they do contribute to a certain stability of character and that, like the Crusades of the Middle Ages, they have given a new insight into the Orient and its life. Our libraries have been enriched by the translations of many books from the East, and their ethical and cosmopolitan teachings are not without some merit.

Confession, so much frowned upon by Protestantism, is witnessing a backward swing to its erstwhile popularity. It is strongly advocated in Buchmanism, and admitted by psychologists to have distinct therapeutic value and as such it may make for a behavior pattern highly profitable in social life. "A sorrow shared is a sorrow halved." It may also be said that the chilly atmosphere so prevalent in some commun-

ions and churches is wholesomely reacted against by the emphasis that cults place upon prayer and the emotional life. There is a solace and relief found in tears.

The stand that several cults take against war and capital punishment must not be overlooked. That it is not without concrete results it attested by the abolition of the death penalty in Porto Rico. The pen with which the bill was signed only recently was presented to the Spiritualist society which labored so tirelessly for the passage of the measure.

True religion is progressive and permits of a new interpretation by each successive generation. Only as it adapts itself to the *status quo* of an ever-changing social order does it stand justified. New needs demand new remedies. Civilization cannot be furthered until these human needs are met, human loves fostered and helped to achieve the best. The cults purport to be an adjustment to, or an empirical improvement in the socio-religious process which is at work in the development of individuals, of social groups, and of institutions. At those junctures in the social process where historic, orthodox faiths appear to be deficient or inadequate, the cults would offer a method of adaptation. They would offer their wares as panaceas and as Utopias that work. Their boundless but often misguided enthusiasm and ardent zeal lend themselves so often to numerous excesses and questionable practices that the intrinsic value of their vaunted contribution to social progress in the main is rendered debatable. The effect of their contribution is largely that of a religious sedative which puts the faithful but deluded to sleep in a fool's paradise, paralyzing, if not killing the nerve of social action.

The appeal of religion, either normal or eccentric, to the modern world is undoubtedly much the same as it has been to every previous age, and must be constantly faced as the medley of rival and conflicting sects contends with normal or historical or traditional religious groups for their place in the sun, wherever religion gets a foothold.

The sociologist does not attempt to evaluate the ethics, the theology nor the philosophy of these movements, but concerns

himself with the *modus operandi* of their teachings in the midst of life and in the social process. Yoga philosophy busies itself with vibrations and deep breathing, but the social scientist has his finger upon the pulse of humanity and is sensitive to the vibrations caused by the injustices of prosperity, the sufferings produced by a ruthless civilization, and the heaving of agonizing masses as they chafe under the cruel exactions of a world rife with unrighteousness, misunderstanding, and prejudice. The stabilizing elements of society must be preserved at every cost. The new and subtle obligations and privileges of corporate and group relationships need the inspiration of worthy religion—a religion which is intensely interested in the development of a more efficient social technique in the promotion of a deeper insight into and understanding of the causes of social action, and in a more effective method for dealing with them. The cults contribute to inter-religious arrogance and subordinate human welfare to personal interests. They fail to be sufficiently impressed with the tragic or painful social situations, nor to sense any special obligation as these situations impinge upon them in their specific religious activities.

The social function of the Church is not something apart from its spiritual purpose. The cults, however, are loathe to permit spiritual power to unite with an ethical program in ordering the problems of society, and to use religion as a guiding social force and as a regnant principle in the realization of the Reign of God on earth. Personal or private motives are always fatal to the realization of this kingdom. Jesus' gospel message was as broad as human need and in this direction he launched his energies.

If the Master of men must depend solely upon the modern religious cults for help and inspiration in ordering society and adjusting a selfish, materialistic, and sin-ridden world,—it is more than likely that he will have to tread the winepress alone. But has he not always been in lonely company?

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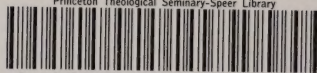
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